Steaming Ahead
Experiences and the Transition from Sail to Steam

Tinning, Morten

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Steaming Ahead
Experiences and the Transition from Sail to Steam

Morten Tinning

Department of Business Humanities and Law

Primary Supervisor:
Associate Professor Mads Mordhorst

Secondary Supervisor:
Associate Professor Anders Ravn Sørensen

CBS PhD School
Copenhagen Business School

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~ ~ ~

The steamer's chimney has replaced the barque's white sails. Gone are the days when the brave sailor received the knighthood in the form of a patent as a mate... Since then, our merchant fleet has been the scene of a sweeping revolution... The patriarchal relationship between the shipping company and the ship's crew no longer exists. The agent has disappeared and has made way for the limited company. At the same time, the sailors are put in uniform. The gold-clad captains, designated officers but nicknamed 'tram conductors' by older sailors, have introduced military command language on the ships. Officers and crew are a caste apart. Advancement from the bottom up is made more difficult. Most senior positions are filled through the patronage of adept shareholders.

In addition to this revolution among sailors comes a significant new element, the stokers. It is not a desire for the sailor's life but a lack of employment on land that usually drives these people to the sea. Brought up under different conditions than the sailors – they are usually apprentice blacksmiths – accustomed to the respect shown to workers in a workshop, they feel quite differently offended by the officers' brutality than the ordinary seafarer.

~ ~ ~

Danish Journalist, Henrik Cavling
in *Dagbladet Politiken*, 12. June, 1890, p. 2.[1]

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[1] This and all subsequent translations from Danish by the author. See 1.7 for notes on translation.

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A vibrant academic community is vital to all research. This dissertation found an inspiring and supportive academic home at the Centre for Business History, Department of Business Humanities & Law, Copenhagen Business School. The hallways, offices, and coffee machines provided the space for creativity and exchange, but the people gave it meaning and made it come alive.

First and foremost, I would like to express my deep gratitude to my supervisors, Mads Mordhorst and Anders Ravn Sørensen, whose support and patience have been invaluable throughout my PhD journey. Both provided me with constructive feedback, insightful suggestions, and empathetic encouragement that reflects in all of the arguments I have developed and, just as important, kept me motivated to continue even during hard times. I also want to give special appreciation to my co-author Christina Lubinski. Thank you for taking the time to read, discuss, and comment on my work, guiding me through the maze of the publishing process, and being one of the most generous and amazing people I know. A special mention also goes out to Dan Wadhwani, whose friendship, creative insights, and playful interdisciplinary approach to academia have helped shape this thesis and me as a scholar.

English abstract

Technological transformations are hard to grasp. Actors experiencing such transformations and academics studying them both struggle to understand the full meaning and impact of such changes because they fundamentally impact daily work and life. This dissertation explores how Danish seafarers experienced and made sense of the transition from sail to steam. The introduction and diffusion of steam power at sea was a pivotal turning point in maritime history. It shaped the historical reality for actors in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century and captured people's imagination. So far, research on this process has primarily focused on technological invention, evolution, and implementation. Scholars have also explored national and regional diffusion patterns of steamships and their economic, organisational, and political consequences. However, how people experienced, made sense of, and engaged with the transition from sail to steam remains open.

Guided by microhistory methodologies, I suggest studying the transition from sail to steam not as an abstract process but as a lived and narrated experience. Microhistory can grasp and contextualise significant societal and technological transformations by studying subtle and subjective experiences at the micro-level. This approach offers new insights into the relationship between labour, economy, and technology and complements existing economic history and ethnographic approaches in maritime research. By rebalancing structure and agency, I offer novel interpretations of the global transition from sail to steam and suggest a way to discuss large-scale transformations on a global scale through studies of lived experiences and individual agency.

In the first article (chapter 2), my co-author Professor Christina Lubinski and I engage methodologically with 'ego-documents' as a category of historical sources of great relevance to microhistory but rarely discussed in English-language research. We discuss the value of

ego-documents for analysing structure and agency and explore how they can be used in future history and management research.

In the second article (chapter 3), I use ego-documents to explore the role of imagined futures in a traditional maritime community in Denmark. My sources come from a public debate in a local Danish newspaper in 1899. Inspired by Jens Beckert's monograph Imagined Futures, I analyse a public discussion about the transition from sail to steam, the individual (and conflicting) voices in the debate, and their impact on community members' professional and personal lives. I show how through a microhistorical approach, I identify the existence of alternative versions of desirable and probable futures within this community, each relating differently to the past and the contemporaneous present.

The third article (chapter 4) explores the subtle re-configuration and conceptualization of authority of the ship's captain in the transition from sail to steam and empirically analyses how it affected power relationships at sea. Power and authority have been of particular interest to microhistorical approaches, and the article discusses how steam propulsion technology changed and re-configured the authority, role, and profession of the sea captain.

The fourth and final article (chapter 5) explores changing concepts of time and temporality at sea and seafarers' experiences with changing time regimes and temporality in the transition from sail to steam. Framed as an extension and critique of E. P. Thompson's analysis of work relations in factories during industrialization, the article explores aspects of industrialization in the maritime sector that have been less explored in historical research.

Each of the four articles uses a specific theoretical and methodological approach, described in more detail in the respective articles. Three of the four articles have already undergone peer-review. In that process, reviewers and editors have impacted the argument, its presentation, and its contribution to the academic community. While

each article stands on its own and makes an independent contribution, they also complement each other in showing the transition from sail to steam as a lived experience. They explore how it affected, respectively, actors' imaginations of the future (chapter 3), understandings of authority at sea (chapter 4), and temporality and time perceptions (chapter 5). Collectively, they discuss the transition from sail to steam from a microhistorical, *agency-in-structure* and *structure-in-agency* perspective, providing new insights into the existing maritime historiography.

Dansk resumé

Teknologiske forandringer er svære at forstå. Introduktion og implementering af nye teknologier påvirker dagligdagens arbejde og liv så fundamentalt, at både aktører, der oplever det, og akademikere, der studerer det, kæmper for at forstå den fulde betydning og virkning af sådanne forandringsprocesser. Målet for denne afhandling har været at undersøge, hvordan danske søfarende erfarede og skabte mening i overgangen fra sejl til damp. Introduktionen og udbredelsen af dampkraft til søs var et afgørende vendepunkt i den maritime historie, der formede den historiske virkelighed for alle aktører i den maritime verden i det lange nittende århundrede og fascinerede de mennesker der oplevede det. Hidtil har forskning i denne proces primært fokuseret på udviklingen og implementeringen af den nye teknologi, den nationale og regionale udbredelse af dampskibe, samt deres økonomiske, organisatoriske og politiske konsekvenser. Men spørger vi, hvordan folk oplevede, skabte mening og engagerede sig i overgangen fra sejl til damp, ligger forskningsfeltet stadig relativt åbent.

Med udgangspunkt i mikrohistoriske tilgange studerer denne afhandling overgangen fra sejl til damp, ikke som en abstrakt proces, men som en levet og fortalt erfaring. Gennem en mikrohistorisk tilgang kan vi forstå og kontekstualisere væsentlige samfundsmæssige og teknologiske transformationer gennem et studie af subtile og subjektive oplevelser på mikroniveau. Denne tilgang giver ny indsigt i forholdet mellem arbejde, økonomi og teknologi og supplerer eksisterende økonomisk historie og etnografiske tilgange inden for maritim forskning. Ved at gen-adressere balancen mellem historiske strukturer og aktører fremlægger jeg nye fortolkninger af overgangen fra sejl til damp, og foreslår denne tilgang som en måde at diskutere store globale transformationer gennem studier detaljerede studier individuelle aktører og deres levede erfaringer.

I den første artikel (kapitel 2) beskæftiger min medforfatter professor Christina Lubinski og jeg os metodisk med 'ego-dokumenter' som en kategori af historiske kilder med stor relevans for mikrohistorie, men som sjældent diskuteres i international (engelsksproget) forskning. Vi diskuterer brugbarheden af ego-dokumenter til at analysere struktur og aktører og undersøger, hvordan de kan bruges i fremtidig historie- og managementforskning.

I den anden artikel (kapitel 3) bruger jeg ego-dokumenter til at udforske forestillede fremtiders (imagined futures) rolle i et traditionelt maritimt samfund i Danmark. Min kilde er en offentlig debat – læserbrevsfejden – der fandt sted i Svendborg Amtstidende i 1899. Inspireret af Jens Beckerts monografi *Imagined Futures* diskuterer jeg denne offentlige debat om overgangen fra sejl til damp, de enkelte (og modstridende) stemmer i debatten, samt deres betydning for medlemmerne af det lokale samfunds professionelle og personlige liv. Jeg viser, hvordan en mikrohistorisk tilgang kan identificerer eksistensen af alternative versioner af ønskværdige og sandsynlige fremtider inden for dette fællesskab, som hver især forholder sig forskelligt til fortiden og aktørernes egen samtid.

Den tredje artikel (kapitel 4) udforsker den subtile re-konfiguration og konceptualisering af skibsførerens (kaptajnens) autoritet i overgangen fra sejl til damp og analyserer, hvordan det påvirkede magtforhold til søs. Magt og autoritet har længe været af særlig interesse for mikrohistoriske tilgange, og artiklen diskuterer, hvordan dampfremdrivningsteknologi ændrede og rekonfigurerede søkaptajnens autoritet, rolle og profession.

Den fjerde og sidste artikel (kapitel 5) undersøger skiftende begreber om tid og temporalitet til søs og søfarendes erfaringer med skiftende tidsregimer og temporalitet i overgangen fra sejl til damp. Artiklen er udlagt som en forlængelse og kritik af E. P. Thompsons analyse af temporalitet og arbejdsrelationer under industrialiseringen, og

artiklen udforsker aspekter af industrialisering i den maritime sektor, som er mindre udforsket i historisk forskning.

Hver af de fire artikler anvender en specifik teoretisk og metodisk tilgang, som er nærmere beskrevet i de respektive artikler. Tre af de fire artikler har allerede gennemgået peer-review. I den proces har fagfællebedømmere og redaktører påvirket argumentet, dets præsentation og dets bidrag til det akademiske samfund. Mens hver artikel står for sig selv og yder et selvstændigt bidrag, supplerer de også hinanden ved at vise overgangen fra sejl til damp som en levet oplevelse og ved at udforske, hvordan denne transformation påvirkede henholdsvis aktørers forestillinger om fremtiden (kapitel 3), forståelser af autoritet til søs (kapitel 4) og tids- og tidsopfattelser (kapitel 5). I fællesskab diskuterer de overgangen fra sejl til damp fra et mikrohistorisk, *agency-in-structure* og *structure-in agency* perspektiv, hvilket giver ny indsigt og tilføjer nye perspektiver til den eksisterende maritime historieskrivning.

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Chapter 1.   Introduction

1.1. The argument in brief

The transition from sail to steam revolutionised the maritime world. During the nineteenth century, the introduction of steamships fundamentally transformed technology, business, organisation, communications, and labour in the maritime industry.[2] As a result, the seafaring experience and even the broader human relationship with the ocean were radically changed.[3] Because the transition from sail to steam marks such a pivotal process in maritime history, historians have for long paid close attention to it.[4] My own interest in it was sparked anew when

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[2] An excellent introduction to the transition from sail to steam in maritime history can be found in: David M. Williams, 'Introduction: The World of Shipping', in *The World of Shipping*, ed. David M. Williams, Studies in Transport History 8 (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 1997), ix–xxvi; A broad introductions from a Danish perspective and context published in English, see Ove Hornby and Carl Axel Nilsson, 'The Transition from Sail to Steam in the Danish Merchant Fleet, 1865-1910', *Scandinavian Economic History Review* 28, no. 2 (1980): 109–34, https://doi.org/10.1080/03585522.1980.10407921.

[3] See for example John Mack, *The Sea: A Cultural History* (London: Reaktion Books, 2011).

[4] Notable examples of early works include: W. S. Lindsay, *History of Merchant Shipping and Ancient Commerce*, vol. IV, IV vols (London: Sampson Low, 1874); G.H. Preble, *A Chronological History of the Origin and Development of Steam Navigation, 1543-1882* (Philidelphia: L.R. Hamersly & Co, 1883); Henry Fry, *The History of North Atlantic Steam Navigation: With Some Account of Early Ships and Shipowners* (London: Sampson Low, Marston and Co. Limited, 1896); John Kennedy, *The History of Steam Navigation*, Alpha Editions (reprint 2020) (Liverpool: Charles Birchall, Limited, 1903); E. Keble Chatterton, *Steamships and Their Story* (London: Cassel and Company, Ltd., 1910); R. A. Fletcher, *Steam-Ships and Their Story* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, Ltd., 1910); Early Danish works include Kurt Kock, *Danske Dampskibs Selskabers Historie - Skibsfarten Som Erhverv* (København: Maritimt Forlag, 1929); Louis E. Grandjean and Ernst Mentze, eds., *Danmark Og Havet*, 2 vols (København: Chr. Erichsens Forlag, 1948); F. Holm-Petersen and A. Rosendahl, eds., *Fra Sejl Til Diesel: Dansk Skibsfart, Søhandel Og Skibsbygning, Bind I-IV.* (København: Skandinavisk Bogforlag, 1951); Most notable is H.C. Røder, *Dansk skibsfarts renæssance - Dansk skibsfarts historie fra Københavns Frihavns åbning 1894 til vor tid - en gammel skippers erindringer*, 2 vols (København: Høst & Søns Forlag, 1962) Røder manages to combine a historical work of some merit intervowen with personal memories and experiences from a life spent at sea.

reading volume five of the latest multi-volume Danish maritime history: *Dansk søfarts historie: 1870-1920, Sejl og damp*.[5] Here leading Danish maritime historians skilfully analyse the economic, technological, and social impact of the transition from sail to steam in Danish shipping. However, as regards the role and experiences of Danish seafarers[6] in this process, they conclude that the seafarers "were extras" and "had to perceive the technological and organisational innovations as part of developments over which they had minimal influence."[7] In short, and in the broader context of Danish maritime history, the seafarers were at best depicted as observing and coping but with little independent agency.

> *Seen from the bridge, the deck, and the engine room, the transition from sail to steam was, in other words, a fundamental condition towards which seafarers of every category – from the captain to the youngest deck boy – had to orientate their life and work.*[8]

The quote and its analysis raise several questions that have guided my path through the research presented here. Reducing seafarers to purely reactive rather than active participants in the change processes illustrates what I find to be an overemphasis on structure over agency. This channelled my interest towards exploring experiences and individual agency from a micro-level perspective.

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[5] Anders Monrad Møller, Henrik Detlefsen, and Hans Christian Johansen, *Sejl og damp, 1870-1920*, vol. 5, 7 vols, Dansk søfarts historie (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1998); The collected seven-volume publication still stand as the standard reference for Danish maritime history *Dansk Søfarts Historie, Vol. 1-7* (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1997-2001).
[6] Throughout the dissertation I use the term 'seafarers' instead of 'sailors' as a way to emphasis the fact that the transition from sail to stem introduced new and different types of work and workers. In a stemship the crew included not only crew capable of handling sails and rigging, but also marine engineers, stokers, and telegraphists etc.
[7] Møller, Detlefsen, and Johansen, *Sejl og damp, 1870-1920*, 5:145.
[8] Møller, Detlefsen, and Johansen, 5:145.

Consequently, this dissertation investigates seafaring experiences during the transition from sail to steam to readdress the relationship between structure and agency within that historical domain. It engages with research in maritime economic history and maritime historical ethnography, discussing the strengths of these two bodies of work. However, it also emphasizes and criticizes the lack of balance between structure and agency in them. As a collective body of research, the four articles all have in common that they explore structural change through close scrutiny of lived experiences. I do this inspired by the traditions of microhistory and its ability to grasp significant and grand societal transformations by studying subtle and subjective experiences at the micro-level.[9]

In what follows, I first give a brief historical introduction to the transition from sail to steam (1.2), followed by a literature review on the subject in maritime economic and ethnographic history (1.3). I then discuss the theoretical approach of this dissertation, building primarily on microhistory and an overarching approach to the relationship between structure and agency inspired by Structuration Theory and the work of Anthony Giddens (1.4). In the next section, I discuss the methods and sources I have engaged with in my research (1.5). I conclude the main part of the introduction with a few thoughts on how maritime history from a micro-level perspective could help us understand other large-scale transformations – exemplified through maritime history's potential engagement with global history (1.6). Lastly, I have a few notes on translations, language and references (1.7) before presenting a schematic overview of the dissertation and a brief summary of the principal arguments of the four papers (1.8).

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[9] Sigurður Gylfi Magnússon and István M. Szijártó, *What Is Microhistory?: Theory and Practice* (London, UK: Taylor & Francis Group, 2013), http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/kbhnhh-ebooks/detail.action?docID=1207529.

1.2. Outlining the transition from sail to steam

On Sunday morning, 23 May 1819, a large crowd of spectators gathered to watch the first Danish paddle steamer *H/S Caledonia* arrive and depart from Copenhagen harbour. Since very few of the city's inhabitants had ever seen a steamship, the ship's steam-powered movement, and the black smoke belching from its smokestack, caused a sensation. As reported in a local newspaper, innumerable observers lined the quay "to witness this new and glorious sight." The same reporter left no doubt about the emotions that the *Caledonia* evoked in the people congregated near the waterfront that day. Reporting the cheering crowd's excitement and techno-optimism, he observed how "the human spirit by its ingenuity has brought two elements as opposed to each other as fire and water to unite their collective power for the benefit and pleasure of man."[10]

The *Caledonia* was undoubtedly a technological marvel and a sensation in its own time. However, in hindsight, the image of *Caledonia* also takes on the weight of historical significance. The ship symbolizes the process of structural change that accompanied the transition from sail to steam in the maritime industry. Importantly, this change did not happen overnight but advanced in fits and starts over nearly a century, providing the backdrop for a multitude of experiences.[11] *Caledonia* is both a metaphor and a concrete physical manifestation of the revolutionary change that swept through maritime business, organization, culture, and human experiences in the long nineteenth century.

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[10] 'Caledonia', *Nyeste Skilderie Af Kjøbenhavn*, 25 May 1819, Year 16 (1819) No. 42 edition, sec. Indenlandske Efteretninger.

[11] For an analysis and discusion on the progress and temporality of the transition from sail to steam, and whether it should be conceptualised as occuring fast or slow David M. Williams and John Armstrong, 'An Appraisal of the Progress of the Steamship in the Nineteenth Century', in *The World's Key Industry - History and Economics of International Shipping*, ed. Gelina Harlaftis, Stig Tenold, and Jesús M. Valdaliso (Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 43–62.

Before the widespread implementation of steam power, ships had relied on sails, wind and ocean currents to navigate from port to port. This method of propulsion was restricted by weather conditions and was frequently slow and unreliable, making long-distance trade and transportation challenging. The steamship allowed increased control over propulsion, reducing the ship's subservience to wind, tides, and ocean currents. Vessels could now steer a more direct course between ports, taking on the characteristics of an oceangoing steam train more than anything else. Like railroads on land, steamships transformed and improved reliability, speed, efficiency and cargo volume for transport at sea.[12]

In terms of chronologic and geographical diffusion of steamships, Britain led the way in both shipbuilding and tonnage, with the majority of steamships built in Britain and Britain possessing the largest steam-propelled merchant fleet before 1914.[13] Scandinavia, including Denmark, were not far behind. From the mid-1870s onwards, the Danish merchant navy saw massive growth in steamship numbers, tonnage, and their share in trade between foreign and domestic ports. However, the increased importance of steamships did not obliterate the substantial Danish merchant fleet of sailing ships. In fact, the Danish merchant fleet of sailing ships experienced a golden age in the late half of the nineteenth century, with 1875 and 1893 marking the high watermarks with a Danish sailing ship tonnage larger than ever before.[14]

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[12] Williams, 'Introduction: The World of Shipping', x.

[13] Yrjö Kaukiainen, 'The Transition from Sail to Steam - Growth and Crisis during a Technological Change', in *Crisis and Transition: Maritime Sectors in the North Sea Region 1790-1940, 8th North Sea History Conference, Bremerhaven 2005*, ed. Lars U. Scholl and David M. Williams (Bremen: Verlag H.M. Hauschild GmbH & Deutschen Schiffahrtsmuseum, 2008), 62–74; See also Lewis R. Fischer and Helge W Nordvik, 'Maritime Transport and the Integration of the North Atlantic Economy, 1850-1914', in *The Emergence of a World Economy 1500-1914*, ed. W. Fischer, R.M. McInnis, and J. Schneider, vol. 33 (Weisbaden: Beiträge zur Wirtschafts- und Sozialgeschichte, 1986), 526–31.

[14] Hornby and Nilsson, 'The Transition from Sail to Steam in the Danish Merchant Fleet, 1865-1910'; Møller, Detlefsen, and Johansen, *Sejl og damp, 1870-1920*, 5:10.

Overall, the combined 'industrial' technological innovations of steamships, telegraphy, and iron shipbuilding, opened up new pathways for change and innovation in the maritime industry. With each technology came novel opportunities and challenges for the maritime sector in the transformation process that would have a crucial and lasting impact on the expansion and development of global trade and commerce.

1.3. Literature review

The literature on late nineteenth and early twentieth-century maritime history and the transition from sail to steam is extensive. This is not surprising. As maritime scholarship shows, the period represented a revolutionary turning point. The sizeable historiography can roughly be categorized into two main bodies of knowledge: (1) economic history approaches and (2) ethnographic approaches. I will introduce them in turn.

Economic history approaches

Economic history approaches point to technology, financial, and economic structures as the prime movers for change in the transition from sail to steam. As a theoretical and analytic approach, it links to what has been termed the *New Economic History* [NEH], related to econometric and cliometric studies,[15] and the early work of institutionalists, such as Douglass C. North and Robert William Fogel.[16]

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[15] Douglass C. North, 'Cliometrics--40 Years Later', *The American Economic Review* 87, no. 2 (1997): 212, https://www.jstor.org/stable/2950956.

[16] See for example Douglass C. North, *Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance*, Political Economy of Institutions and Decisions (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511808678; Robert William Fogel, 'The Limits of Quantitative Methods in History', *The American Historical Review* 80, no. 2 (1975): 329–50, https://doi.org/10.2307/1850498; Robert W. Fogel, 'Catching up with the Economy', *The American Economic Review* 89, no. 1 (1999): 1–21, https://www.jstor.org/stable/116977; It's worth mentioning that the early research of both North and Fogel dealt with the impact of steam power and industrialisation in the late

As a research field, NEH emerged in the late 1950s as a novel approach to studying economic history.[17] Earlier, economic historians (including maritime historians) had primarily used descriptive and narrative methods to study historical events.[18] In contrast, NEH scholars typically relied on statistical methods to analyse data on economic variables, such as prices, wages, trade volume, and productivity, to identify patterns and trends over time. The *new* referred to this more rigorously quantified and systematic approach to studying economic history, focusing on extensive economic theory, statistical methods, and quantitative analysis to explain historical patterns and trends. Exponents of NEH concentrate on long-term and large-scale trends in economic history and mainly concern themselves with explaining the underlying causes of economic development and growth.

As pioneers of NEH and the cliometrics movement, Douglass North, and notably Gary Walton and Jim Mak, used quantitative and statistical methods to analyse historical data on freight rates in the seventeenth to nineteenth-century US and Atlantic maritime economy. Identifying falling freight rates in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth

nineteenth century. While North did seminal work on the the effect of steamship on freight rates and productivity in the maritime economy Fogel focused on the impact of the railroad and the American iron industry. Douglass C North, 'Ocean Freight Rates and Economic Development 1730-1913', *The Journal of Economic History* 18, no. 4 (1958): 537–55, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022050700107739; Douglass C. North, 'Sources of Productivity Change in Ocean Shipping, 1600-1850', *Journal of Political Economy* 76, no. 5 (1968): 953–70, https://doi.org/10.1086/259462; Professor Robert William Fogel, *Railroads and American Economic Growth: Essays in Econometric History*, 1St Edition (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1964); Robert W. Fogel and Stanley L. Engerman, 'A Model for the Explanation of Industrial Expansion during the Nineteenth Century: With an Application to the American Iron Industry', *Journal of Political Economy* 77, no. 3 (1969): 306–28, https://www.jstor.org/stable/1828906.

[17] Douglass C. North dates it to a joint meeting of the Economic History Association and the National Bureau of Economic Research in the fall of 1957.1957 North, 'Cliometrics--40 Years Later'.

[18] A good example is Kennedy, *The History of Steam Navigation*; In a Danish context see for example Bering Liisberg, ed., *Danmarks Søfart Og Handel*, vol. 2, 2 vols (København: Nyt Nordisk Forlag, 1919); Holm-Petersen and Rosendahl, *Fra Sejl Til Diesel*.

century, they pointed to institutional improvements rather than technological innovation as the critical component in lowering transport costs and the impact this had on economic development and the characteristics of this process.[19] Although North acknowledged the importance of the transition from sail to steam, he argued against this change as the primary cause of declining freight rates.[20]

The pioneering work of North and others initially focused on a longer time frame focused on the pre-steamship era.[21] However, from the early 1970s, maritime historians began adopting the NEH approach and methodology to engage in more detail with the transition from sail to steam. Unlike North, these studies emphasized the importance of technology as a prime mover for change and the transition from sail to steam as a crucial watershed moment in maritime (and economic) history.[22]

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[19] North, 'Ocean Freight Rates and Economic Development 1730-1913'; North, 'Sources of Productivity Change in Ocean Shipping, 1600-1850'; Gary M. Walton, 'Colonial Tonnage Measurements: A Comment', *The Journal of Economic History* 27, no. 3 (1967): 392–97, https://www.jstor.org/stable/2116033; Gary M. Walton, 'Productivity Change in Ocean Shipping after 1870: A Comment', *The Journal of Economic History* 30, no. 2 (1970): 435–41, https://www.jstor.org/stable/2116877; Gary M. Walton, 'The New Economic History and the Burdens of the Navigation Acts', *The Economic History Review* 24, no. 4 (1971): 533–42, https://doi.org/10.2307/2648913; James Mak and Gary M. Walton, 'Steamboats and the Great Productivity Surge In River Transportation', *The Journal of Economic History* 32, no. 3 (1972): 619–40, https://www.jstor.org/stable/2116652; James Mak and Gary M. Walton, 'The Persistence of Old Technologies: The Case of Flatboats', *The Journal of Economic History* 33, no. 2 (1973): 444–51, https://www.jstor.org/stable/2116689.

[20] North, 'Ocean Freight Rates and Economic Development 1730-1913', 542–43.

[21] See for example Ralph Davis, 'Merchant Shipping in the Economy of the Late Seventeenth Century', *The Economic History Review* 9, no. 1 (1956): 59–73, https://doi.org/10.2307/2591531; Ralph Davis, *The Rise of the English Shipping Industry in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries by Ralph Davis* (Macmillan & Co Ltd, 1962); Ralph Davis, 'English Foreign Trade, 1700-1774', *The Economic History Review* 15, no. 2 (1962): 285–303, https://doi.org/10.2307/2598999; Ralph Davis, 'The Rise of Protection in England, 1689-1786', *The Economic History Review* 19, no. 2 (1966): 306–17, https://doi.org/10.2307/2592254.

[22] C. K. Harley, S. B. Saul, and S. Pollard, 'The Shift from Sailing Ships to Steamships, 1850–1890':, in *Essays on a Mature Economy: Britain After 1840*, ed. D.N. McCloskey (Princeton University Press, 1971), 215–38, http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt13x17h5.12;

Seminal contributions to maritime labour and social history also emerged from these new cliometric approaches. In particular, *The Atlantic Canada Shipping Project* (1976-1982) warrants mention. A pivotal project in maritime history, it engaged some of the finest maritime historians of its time, and the project produced a steady stream of proceedings, research papers, and books based on the collection and systematic statistical approach to a massive amount of data from nineteenth and early twentieth century Atlantic Canadian ports.[23] Out of that project came important work on seafaring labour's changing economic and structural

Knick C. Harley, 'Ocean Freight Rates and Productivity, 1740–1913: The Primacy of Mechanical Invention Reaffirmed', *The Journal of Economic History* 48, no. 4 (December 1988): 851–76, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022050700006641; Knick C. Harley, 'Coal Exports and British Shipping, 1850–1913', *Explorations in Economic History* 26, no. 3 (1 July 1989): 311–38, https://doi.org/10.1016/0014-4983(89)90024-7; C. Knick Harley, 'Steers Afloat: The North Atlantic Meat Trade, Liner Predominance, and Freight Rates, 1870-1913', *The Journal of Economic History* 68, no. 4 (2008): 1028–58, https://www.jstor.org/stable/40056468.

[23] Atlantic Canada Shipping Project, Keith Matthews, et al., eds., *Ships and Shipbuilding in the North Atlantic Region: Proceedings of the Conference of the Atlantic Canada Shipping Project* (St. John's, Nfld.: Maritime History Group, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1977); Atlantic Canada Shipping Project, Lewis R. Fischer, et al., eds., *The Enterprising Canadians: Entrepreneurs and Economic Development in Eastern Canada, 1820-1914. Proceedings of the Second Conference Ofthe Atlantic Canada Shipping Project* (St. John's, Nfld.: Maritime History Group, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1978); Atlantic Canada Shipping Project, David Alexander, et al., eds., *Volumes Not Values: Canadian Sailing Ships and World Trades. Proceedings of the Third Conference of the Atlantic Canada Shipping Project* (St. John's, Nfld.: Maritime History Group, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1979); Eric W. Sager, *Seafaring Labour: The Merchant Marine of Atlantic Canada 1820-1914* (Kingston, Montreal, London: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989); Eric W. Sager and Gerald E. Panting, *Maritime Capital: The Shipping Industry in Atlantic Canada, 1820-1914* (McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990), https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt80jt2; Atlantic Canada Shipping Project, Rosemary Ommer, et al., eds., *Working Men Who Got Wet: Proceedings of the Fourth Conference of the Atlantic Canada Shipping Project, July 24-July 26, 1980* (St. John's, Nfld.: Maritime History Group, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1980); Atlantic Canada Shipping Project. Conference (5th : 1981 : Memorial University of Newfoundland), *Merchant Shipping and Economic Development in Atlantic Canada : Proceedings of the Fifth Conference of the Atlantic Canada Shipping Project, June 25-June 27, 1981*, ed. Lewis R. Fischer and Eric W. Sager ([St. John's] : Maritime History Group, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1982), http://archive.org/details/merchantshipping0000atla.

conditions, which led Eric W. Sager to summarize that the transition from sail to steam – or industrialization at sea – had eroded the notion of craft and replaced it with the skills and social relations of an industrial workplace.[24]

Moving to a Danish context, economic history approaches became prominent in the 1980s and have since produced an important and significant body of work on Danish maritime history, including the multi-volume publication quoted in the introduction.[25] This historiography includes what we might call more traditional business history, including numerous histories of Danish shipping companies, focus on large-scale economic changes, and often supplemented or combined with biographies of influential financial and industrial leaders in Danish maritime history.[26] To the extent that this body of work relates to individual agency, it focuses primarily on tropes of *heroic*

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[24] Eric W. Sager, *Seafaring Labour: The Merchant Marine of Atlantic Canada 1820-1914*, 245–65.

[25] Hornby and Nilsson, 'The Transition from Sail to Steam in the Danish Merchant Fleet, 1865-1910'; Holger Munchaus Petersen and Anders Monrad Møller, 'Hundrede Års Handelsflåde i Grove Træk', in *Maritim Kontakt Nr. 8*, vol. 8, Maritim Kontakt (Maritim Kontakt – Kontaktudvalget for Dansk Maritim Historie- og Samfundsforskning, 1984), 7–19; Ove Hornby, 'Dansk Skibsfart 1870-1940: Nogle Hovedlinier i Udviklingen', *AArbog for Handels- Og Søfartsmuseet P\aa Kronborg*, 1988, 31–70; Anders Monrad Møller, *Jagt og Skonnert - Studier i den danske provinssøfart i tiden fra 1814 til 1864* (København: Falcon Bøger, 1988); *Dansk Søfarts Historie, Vol. 1-7*; Knud Arne Petersen, 'Danske Søfragtrater 1869-1913: Kul Og Korn over Nordsøen' (Master Thesis, Copenhagen, Copenhagen University, Saxo-Institute Department of History, 2006).

[26] Ole Lange, *Den Hvide Elefant. H.N. Andersens Eventyr Og ØK 1852-1914* (Gyldendal, 1986); Ole Lange, *Jorden Er Ikke Større... H.N. Andersen, ØK Og Storpolitikken 1914-37* (København: Gyldendal, 1988); Ove Hornby, *'Ved Rettidig Omhu...': Skibsreder A.P. Møller 1876-1965* (København: Rederiet A.P. Møller & Forlaget Schultz, 1988); Ole Lange, *Logbog for Lauritzen 1884-1995. Historien Om Konsulen, Hans Sønner Og Lauritzen Gruppen* (Frederiksberg: Handelshøjskolens Forlag, 1995); Ole Lange, *Juvelen Der Blev Til Skrot. Kampen Om B&W 1945-96* (København: Gyldendal, 2001); Martin Jes Iversen, *Udsyn: ØK, Danmark Og Verden* (København: Lindhardt & Ringhof, 2016); Jens Toftgaard, ed., *Odense Staalskibsværft - 1918-2012* (Odense: Syddansk Universitetsforlag, 2016); Martin Jes Iversen, *Norden Rundt : Dampskibsselskabet Norden 1871-2021.* (København: Lindhardt & Ringhof, 2021).

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entrepreneurs[27] in the Danish maritime industry, stressing their lives, prowess, talent, determination, and relevance for the industry and society. The day-to-day experiences of actors in the maritime industry largely remain excluded.

In sum, for the last fifty years, scholars have continually expanded our understanding of the transition from sail to steam using increasingly more detailed statistical data on trade, ships and tonnage, port entries etc. This approach to economic, business and maritime history has provided historians with new tools to better understand the economic forces that shaped the past as well as the present. The impact of these economic approaches and quantitative methodologies has been profound. It has produced essential insights into maritime history, such as the vital role of institutions in maritime economic development and the impact of technological change on economic growth.

Yet, despite its many merits and significant contributions to maritime and economic history, these quantitative, structural, and institutional approaches also have limitations. As exemplified in the quote at the beginning of this introduction, they openly relegate the seafarers – as individually and collectively acting and feeling people – to a relatively insignificant role. Seafarers are depicted as passively perceiving and adapting to the revolutionary change that steam technology and macro-level industrialisation brought to the maritime world. They are shown as objects of the broader change process induced by the transition from sail to steam. Yet, their experiences, grievances, feelings, and explorations are not prominent in this approach to maritime history and are rarely taken into account to explain this or other large-scale transformations. By contrast, seafarers' individual and collective

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[27] Joseph A. Schumpeter, 'The Creative Response in Economic History', *The Journal of Economic History* 7, no. 2 (1947): 149–59, https://www.jstor.org/stable/2113338; See also Sophie Boutillier and Dimitri Uzunidis, 'Heroic Entrepreneur, Theories', in *Encyclopedia of Creativity, Invention, Innovation and Entrepreneurship*, ed. Elias G. Carayannis (New York, NY: Springer, 2013), 838–50, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4614-3858-8_450.

experiences have played a much more significant role in the ethnographic approaches to maritime history, which I explore in the next section.

Historical ethnographic approaches

Historical ethnographic studies of the maritime industry grew from the broader social and cultural history trend that gained momentum in the 1960s. Knut Weiburst pioneered this field, breaking new ground with an academic approach that reached beyond the folkloristic tradition of old sailor's tales that had been reproduced for long as a specific form of popular historical narrative.[28]

Weiburst's initial work was followed by a steady trickle of articles and books on Scandinavian maritime culture and ethnography. However, as seafarers received more attention from maritime historians and ethnographers, the primary focus was on seafaring life in sailing ships.[29] As a result, the seafarer's experience of the transition from sail to steam was often only mentioned in passing as an endpoint to the narrative arc and depicted through the prism of a somewhat nostalgic, critical, and anxious generation of sailors who viewed the new steamers with suspicion and even disdain.[30]

Historical ethnographic approaches are important because they foreground the importance of individual and collective experiences and how they help explain change. In broad terms, these scholars have been interested in the experiences of seafarers because they perceive seafaring and maritime life as somewhat unique due to its unusual spatial and contextual conditions compared to landed society. The experiences of

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[28] Knut Weiburst, *Deep Sea Sailors: A Study in Maritime Ethnology*, Nordiska Museets Handlingar 71 (Stockholm: Nordiska museet, 1969).

[29] Weiburst; In Britain the life of sailors in the Royal Navy has been a primary focus. N. A. M. Rodger, *The Wooden World: An Anatomy of the Georgian Navy* (London: Collins, 1986); Stephen Taylor, *Sons of the Waves: The Common Seaman in the Heroic Age of Sail* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2020).

[30] See for example Ole Mortensøn, *Sejlskibssøfolk - fra Det sydfynske Øhav* (Rudkøbing: Langelands Museum, 1987).

seafarers matter because their lifestyle is unique and shaped historically by distinct environments, contexts and needs.

In this line of research, the ship is often depicted as a very different space, ruled by unique legal and cultural codes. For example, French historian and philosopher Michel Foucault portrays 'the ship' as a "heterotopia" par excellence: "[…] a floating piece of space, a place without a place that exists by itself, that is closed in on itself and at the same time is given over to the infinity of the sea."[31] To Foucault, the ship represented a place where landed society's cultural and social rules, relationships and practices could be strengthened, compressed, rethought, overthrown, or wholly put out of force.

Along similar lines, several historians have pointed to and characterized the ship as having a particular relationship to time and space, thus directly or indirectly invoking its heterotopic character. Some have seen the ship as a linguistic and political hybrid that allows for the crossing and breaking of social, geographical and national boundaries.[32] Others have pointed to its function as a place where radical narratives are exchanged, fostering resistance and rebellion among the socially excluded[33] or as a floating island where cultures are exposed and forced to confront each other[34], including gendered norms[35] and social space.[36] In a more contemporary context, the American cruise ships of the 1950s

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[31] Michel Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces, Heterotopias', trans. Jay Miskowiec, *Architecture, Mouvement, Continuité* 5 (1984): 46–49,
https://foucault.info/documents/heterotopia/foucault.heteroTopia.en/.

[32] Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Verso, 1993).

[33] Johan Lund Heinsens, *Mutiny in the Danish Atlantic World: : Convicts, Sailors and a Dissonant Empire* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2017),
https://www.bloomsbury.com/uk/mutiny-in-the-danish-atlantic-world-9781350027367/.

[34] Greg Dening, *Mr Bligh's Bad Language: Passion, Power and Theatre on the Bounty*, New Ed edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

[35] Sarah Crabtree, 'Navigating Mobility: Gender, Class, and Space at Sea, 1760–1810', *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 48, no. 1 (2014): 89–106,
https://www.jstor.org/stable/24690373.

[36] D. Hart, 'Sociability and "Separate Spheres" on the North Atlantic: The Interior Architecture of British Atlantic Liners, 1840-1930', *Journal of Social History* 44, no. 1 (2010): 189–212, https://doi.org/10.1353/jsh.2010.0029.

have been interpreted as a 'heterotopia' for gay men whose sexuality was outlawed and punishable in society at large.[37] Because of the interest in the ship as a unique space for lived experiences, this body of work has especially emphasized the age of sail, being, as it is, a 'lost' experience far removed from modern life.

Ethnographic approaches have also occasionally engaged with how the seafarers' traditional way of life was significantly altered with the introduction of steam-powered ships. Steam power not only brought about profound changes in how ships were powered, navigated, and managed but also in the working lives of seafarers. For one, what seafarers perceived as the essence of their labour changed considerably because steamships required entirely different skills and training for their operation and maintenance. However, changes were not limited to work practices, wages, and crew composition but extended to include also the sensory, emotional, and cognitive experience of seafaring. In other words, the transition from sail to steam affected the very heart of seafaring identity.

Yet, even though the transition from sail to steam played a decisive role in Danish maritime history, the change and transformations of Danish seafarers' working and living conditions have not attracted much attention. Thus, the most thorough analysis of seafaring life comes from maritime ethnography. Here the works of pioneers like Vilhelm Aubert[38] and Knut Weiburst[39] stand out because they show the value of studying experiences academically and beyond the folkloristic tradition. The same applies to Olof Hasslöf's introductions into maritime

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[37] Jo Stanley and Paul Baker, *Hello Sailor! The Hidden History of Gay Life at Sea* (Routledge, 2003), https://www.kobo.com/ww/en/ebook/hello-sailor.

[38] Vilhelm Aubert and Oddvar Arner, 'On the Social Structure of the Ship', *Acta Sociologica* 3, no. 1 (1 January 1958): 200–219, https://doi.org/10.1177/000169935800300118; Vilhelm Aubert and Oddvar Arner, *The Ship as a Social System* (Institute for Social Research, 1962); Vilhelm Aubert, *The Hidden Society* (Totowa, N.J.,USA: Bedminster Press, 1965).

[39] Weiburst, *Deep Sea Sailors: A Study in Maritime Ethnology.*

ethnology[40], the multiple works on seafaring rituals and traditions by Henning Henningsen[41], Poul Holms *longue durée* overview of Scandinavian maritime coastal culture[42], and to some extent, Christian Tortzen's mammoth work on Danish seafarers during the Second World War.[43]

Organised labour is one area where one would expect engagement with seafarers' experiences. Yet, suppose we turn to the history of unions and labour organisations. In that case, Danish historiography lacks research that matches the Norwegian and Swedish work by scholars such as Aksel Zachariasen[44] and Yngve Gyllin.[45] In Danish historiography, the published master thesis of Henning Vester Jørgesen and Christian Tortsen's two-volume history of the Danish

[40] Olof Hasslöf, Henning Henningsen, and Arne Emil Christensen, eds., *Sømand, Fisker, Skib Og Værft - Introduktion Til Maritim Etnologi* (København: Rosenkilde og Bagger, 1970); Olof Hasslöf, 'Maritim Etnologi Och Dess Grannvetenskaper', in *Sømand, Fisker, Skib Og Værft: Introduktion Til Maritim Etnologi*, ed. Olof Hasslöf, Henning Henningsen, and Arne Emil Christensen (København: Rosenkilde og Bagger, 1970), 9–20; Olof Hasslöf, 'Maritimt Næringsliv i Socialhistorisk Belysning', in *Sømand, Fisker, Skib Og Værft: Introduktion Til Maritim Etnologi*, ed. Olof Hasslöf, Henning Henningsen, and Arne Emil Christensen (København: Rosenkilde og Bagger, 1970), 74–123.
[41] Henning Henningsen, *Crossing the Equator: Sailors' Baptism and Other Initiation Rites* (Copenhagen: Munksgard, 1961); Henning Henningsen, 'Vagt Til Søs', *Handels- Og Søfartsmuseets Årbog*, no. 26 (1967): 168–75, https://tidsskrift.dk/mfs_aarbog/article/view/96201; Henning Henningsen, 'Sømandsliv Ombord Og i Land. Kilder Og Indordningssystemer', in *Sømand, Fisker, Skib Og Værft: Introduktion Til Maritim Etnologi*, ed. Olof Hasslöf, Henning Henningsen, and Arne Emil Christensen (København: Rosenkilde og Bagger, 1970), 124–53; Henning Henningsen, 'Rejs Ud Til Vagt! Om Vagtsystemets Forudsætninger Og Opkomst', *Handels- Og Søfartsmuseets Årbog*, no. 44 (1985): 45–113, https://tidsskrift.dk/mfs_aarbog/issue/view/6691; Henning Henningsen, 'Sømandens Indsamlingsbøsse', *Handel- Og Søfartsmuseets Aarbog* 55 (1996): 23–43.
[42] Poul Holm, *Kystfolk - Kontakter Og Sammenhænge over Kattegat Og Skagerrak ca. 1550-1914* (Esbjerg: Fiskeri- og Søfartsmuseet, 1991).
[43] Christian Tortzen, *Søfolk Og Skibe 1939-1945. Den Danske Handelsflådes Historie under Anden Verdenskrig, Bd. 1-4* (København: Grafisk Forlag, 1981).
[44] Aksel Zachariassen, *Fra Trellekår Til Frie Menn. Norsk Sjømannsforbund Gjennom 40 År.* (Oslo: Norsk Sjømannsforbbund, 1950).
[45] Yngve Gullin, *Förbund På Sju Hav. Händelser Och Gestalter i Sjöfolkets Historia.* (Stockholm: Svenska Sjöfolksförbundet, 1964).

Sailor's Union (Sømændenes Forbund) represent the few Danish historical works in this field.[46]

The everyday life of Danish seafarers in the late nineteenth century has also found some representation in regional studies of Danish maritime history. Examples include the numerous publications of F. Holm-Petersen[47], the works of Ole Mortensøn[48], and Ole Wathoe-Hansen.[49]

These diverse ethnographic approaches have contributed extensively to our understanding of maritime culture and individual and collective experiences. However, the contributions have a relatively static understanding of technological and institutional conditions. They do not typically engage much with the historical evolution of economic structures and how people experience and navigate significant technological and organizational changes. While the financial and economic history approaches tend to over-emphasize structure over agency, the ethnographic approaches focus on agency but often embed it into relatively static historical contexts. Only selectively and in passing have scholars engaged with the transition from sail to steam as a historical phenomenon through seafarers' experiences.

Thus, scholars have found ways to explore social relationships between seafarers and how they experience life and community. Yet,

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[46] Henning Vester Jørgensen, *Arbejdere Til Søs 1870-1911*, Tidens Højskoles Serie 1 (NA: Tidens Højskoles Forlag, 1987); Christian Tortzen, *En Sømand Han Maa Lide: Sømændenes Forbund 1897-1997 Bind I: De Første 50 År*, vol. 1, 2 vols (Valby: Pantheon, 2001); Christian Tortzen, *En Sømand Han Maa Lide: Sømændenes Forbund 1897-1997 Bind II: De Sidste 50 År*, vol. 2, 2 vols (Valby: Pantheon, 2007).
[47] F. Holm-Petersen, *Træk Af Skibsfartens Udvikling i Svendborg Toldsted*, 1st ed. (Svendborg: Svendborg By, 1953); F. Holm-Petersen, ed., *Fanø-Sejlskibe - Beretninger Og Breve Fra de Hvide Sejls Dage* (Aarhus: Henning Clausens Boghandel, 1956); F. Holm-Petersen, *Skibe og Søfolk fra Svendborgsund* (Haderslev: Munksgaards Forlag / Skandinavisk Bogforlag, 1963).
[48] Mortensøn, *Sejlskibssøfolk - fra Det sydfynske Øhav*.
[49] Ole Warthoe-Hansen, Henrik Fode, and Finn H. Lauridsen, *Søkøbstaden Randers: Flodhavn Og Købmandsby* (Randers: Randers Skipperlaug , Randers Amts historiske Samfund, 1980).

most historical ethnographic approaches to seafaring life focus on the age of sail. They often approach change from a nostalgic perspective or from the standpoint of the "co-existence, rather than competition" of sail and steam, only tangentially exploring the experience of technological transition and processes of change.[50]

A disconnected historiography

To sum up, maritime history has extensively dealt with structure in the context of institutional change and financial and economic developments. It has also given attention to agency by exploring seafaring life and how actors act, feel and think within the unique confined environment of the ship. However, these perspectives have been kept neatly separated. Consequently, the literature on the transition from sail to steam appears somewhat disconnected. Either it prioritises structure and relegates seafarers' experiences to a different sphere or footnote. Or it focuses on experiences but places them in an earlier, overly static historical context.

To complement both bodies of work, my dissertation departs from the premise that we must analyse the agency of thinking and feeling actors in historically evolving structures to fully understand the transition from sail to steam. Fortunately, such an approach can build on an immense effort by Danish museums to collect and publish oral and written accounts from seafarers. Using these sources, I make an argument for an integrative approach, exploring how people experience structural change, engage with it, grieve losses, celebrate victories, and reinterpret – often slowly over time rather than abruptly – their position within changing structures. Silencing these actors' experiences means we only discuss parts of the structural changes that occurred. The interdisciplinary dialogue required to explore an integrative perspective has not yet taken place to any greater extent. I argue that in a literature

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[50] Møller, Detlefsen, and Johansen, *Sejl og damp, 1870-1920*, 5:245.

that has either foregrounded structure over agency (economic history approaches) or disembedded actors' agency from structural change (ethnographic approaches). A deliberate focus on "agency in structure" and "structure in agency" provides a novel and exciting perspective on the transition from sail to steam.

1.4. Theory: A microhistorical exploration

I advance a microhistorical perspective to rethink the transition from sail to steam. I explore how studying individual and collective experiences in sources on the micro-level helps us better understand this large-scale and highly impactful structural change process.

Microhistory is particularly well suited for my research interest because it balances empirically grounded studies of individuals and their experiences in their own time with macro-processes of continuity and change in social structures over time. As Hargadon and Wadhwani have explicated, microhistorical research is deeply rooted in the analysis of empirical sources of the *lived experiences* of individuals.[51] Yet, it engages in such a microscopic analysis to identify and understand broader historical processes of change or continuity, such as the transition from sail to steam. So construed, my microhistorical approach is centred on two questions. How do we grasp the duality of structure and agency in the transition from sail to steam? And how does a "reflexive use of time" – making historical observations of experiences in time and linking them to longer-term historical processes over time – bring new perspectives to maritime history?

Microhistory and the duality of structure and agency

A microhistorical approach has been widely used in various fields, including social, cultural, and economic history, and has been

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[51] Andrew B. Hargadon and R. Daniel Wadhwani, 'Theorizing with Microhistory', *Academy of Management Review*, Fortcoming, https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2019.0176.

particularly influential in the study of early modern Europe. Microhistories emphasize the importance of context, contingency, and individual agency in shaping historical processes and seek to provide a more nuanced understanding of the complexity and diversity of human experience.

The origins of microhistory can be traced back to the 1970s when a group of Italian historians, including Carlo Ginzburg[52] and Giovanni Levi[53], began to explore the potential of a more focused, microscopic approach to historical research. These scholars argued that by examining the lives and experiences of individuals in specific historical contexts, it was possible to better understand broader social, cultural, and economic processes. Specifically, their crucial objection to the social science (structural) approach was that the human experience was lost, thus making it impossible to fully understand the macro-level change and its consequences. Ordinary people and their experiences had been neglected. To bring them back, history had to turn to the micro-level conditions and experiences of everyday life.

The Italian microhistorians specifically criticised earlier social historians, such as Fernand Braudel, for focusing too much on the material conditions and too little on the human experience of these conditions.[54] As Giovanni Levi noted, Fernand Braudel's house of history had many rooms with different approaches and views – but no people living in it.[55] Above all, microhistory theorised the scale issue by

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[52] Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth Century Miller.* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980); Carlo Ginzburg, John Tedeschi, and Anne C . Tedeschi, 'Microhistory : Two or Three Things That I Know about It Published', *Critical Inquiry* 20, no. 1 (1993): 10–35.

[53] Giovanni Levi, *Inheriting Power: The Story of an Exorcist*, trans. Lydia Cochrane (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988); Giovanni Levi, 'On Microhistory', in *New Perspectives on Historical Writing* (Cambridge: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992).

[54] George G. Iggers, *Historiography in the Twentieth Century - From Scientific Objectivity to the Postmodern Challenge* (Hanover, New England, US: Wesleyan University Press, 1997), 102.

[55] Levi, *Inheriting Power*, 1988.

studying the individual experience. Analysed at the micro level, it can take on significant importance by introducing everyday agency into structural histories and grand narratives.

Thus, one of the critical features of microhistorical approaches is its emphasis on close readings and analysis of primary sources, including ego-documents, such as diaries, letters, court records, and other documents that provide insight into individual everyday experiences and actions.[56] Through the micro-level approach, historians explore how individual actions and decisions are shaped by and contribute to broader social, cultural, and economic structures and how they offer a more nuanced understanding of the complexity and contingency of historical change. In "dealing with the individual lives of the many", they advanced "an epistemology geared to the experiences of these many that permits knowledge of the concrete rather than the abstract."[57]

As part of a broader cultural turn, microhistorical approaches have become increasingly influential, not just in historical research but also in management and organization studies.[58] Its focus on context, contingency, and individual agency has helped shed light on the complexity and diversity of human experience. It has provided new insights into a wide range of historical consequences of such actions. At the same time, microhistories have also generated lively debates among historians, particularly around epistemology, interpretations of social action that account for both context and

consequences and how to best explore and theorize the relationship between agency and structure.

Debates about structure and agency have a long tradition in history. They often relate to Anthony Gidden's structuration theory, which focuses on (re-)creating social systems by analysing both structure

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[56] Morten Tinning and Christina Lubinski, 'Ego-Documents in Management and Organisational History' (Working Paper, Copenhagen, 2022).

[57] Iggers, *Historiography of the Twentieth Century*, 103.

[58] Hargadon and Wadhwani, 'Theorizing with Microhistory', Fortcoming.

and agency without prioritizing one over the other.[59] In this context, structure refers to the social and material environment actors inhabit. It can be described in broad constructs, such as institutions, cultures, or fields, and usually links to relationships and norms that shape and constrain human behaviour. Agency, on the other hand, refers to the capacity of individuals and groups to act in a purposeful and self-directed manner, the choices and actions of individuals, and how they shape their own lives and the world around them.[60]

In historical analysis, the balance of structure and agency is essential, as frequently argued by microhistorians. Understanding the structures that shape events can help explain why things happened the way they did. Understanding the agency of individuals and groups can provide insights into how and why events took a particular course. Thus, the interplay between structure and agency must be of primary concern for historians, who seek to understand the constraints and opportunities that shaped human behaviour in the past.

According to Giddens, the relationship between structure and agency is complex, dynamic, and, most importantly, ongoing and reciprocal. While structures shape the choices and opportunities available to individuals and groups, they have the potential to challenge, resist, and change these structures through their actions and decisions. Giddens argues that there is a reciprocal duality (not dualism) between structure and agency, where a structure is both the medium and the outcome of the reproduction of practices. Secondly, he posits that structure constitutes both the agent and social practices and "exists" in the generating moments of this constitution.[61] By investigating this duality or reciprocal

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[59] Anthony Giddens, *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1984); See also Anthony Giddens, *Central Problems in Social Theory: Action, Structure and Contradictions in Social Analysis*, Theoretical Traditions in the Social Sciences (London: Macmillan Press, 1979).
[60] Giddens, *Central Problems in Social Theory: Action, Structure and Contradictions in Social Analysis*, 49–95.
[61] Giddens, 5.

connection between structure and agency, we can understand the interplay between constraints and opportunities in human behaviour and underline agency's importance in shaping and changing the world.[62]

Microhistory and reflexive temporality

Temporality plays an essential role in the most recent attempts at theorizing with microhistory.[63] One of the strengths of microhistory is that it can connect the lived experiences of individuals in their own time with consequences and longer-term developments over time. This also includes a closer look at how actors relate their experiences to their interpretations of the past and their imaginations of the future. Together this allows for a historical analysis of actors' intentions, fears and uncertainties, and considerations of alternative paths.[64]

In his book *Imagined Futures: Fictional Expectations and Capitalist Dynamics* (2016)[65], sociologist Jens Beckert argues that the rise of capitalism was not simply a matter of economic and political factors but also of human imagination. Beckert's central argument is that capitalism is sustained by a particular kind of imagination, which he conceptualizes as "fictional expectations."[66] Fictional expectations are *ideas*, *experiences,* and *stories* that people tell themselves about the future and which, in turn, shape their behaviour in the present. Beckert argues that such fictional expectations are not just random or arbitrary but are shaped by historical, social, and cultural factors. In particular, he argues that capitalism has relied on a specific set of fictional expectations, such as endless growth and progress and the notion that the

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[62] Giddens, A. (1984). Constitution of society: outline on the theory of structuration. Polity Press.

[63] Hargadon and Wadhwani, 'Theorizing with Microhistory', Fortcoming.

[64] Raff, How to Do Things With Time. Maybe Mordhorst counterfactual history? Popp & Holt 2013.

[65] Jens Beckert, *Imagined Futures: Fictional Expectations and Capitalist Dynamics* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016).

[66] Beckert.

market is a neutral and efficient mechanism for allocating resources. In particular, Beckert assigns great relevance to ideas about the future, which shaped scientific and technological development.[67] One of his key insights is that the future is not just something that happens to us but that is actively shaped by human imagination and action. By understanding how actors used their experiences to imagine novel and desirable futures, we can gain a deeper understanding of historical change.

In sum, I follow a microhistorical approach to rebalance structure and agency in maritime history. I investigate individual and communal experiences on the micro-level to grasp the crucial change that the transition from sail to steam brought about in a different manner than prior research has done. The strength of such an approach is that it places individual and collective actions in context, meaning it analyses them in their own time and with a focus on the lived experiences of the seafarers, which have often gotten lost in historical work that focuses exclusively on large-scale change. The discussion of Giddens has provided valuable insights into the question of how seafarers have the potential to assert their own agency within the constraints of the maritime industry. A potential, I argue, that becomes visible only through qualitative analysis that balances structure and agency and which includes negotiations about identity and experiences within a specific context. Rebalancing structure and agency in this way allows me to examine how seafarers interacted with and made sense of evolving social, cultural, and economic structures. The goal is to explore how seafarers navigated the complex and changing conditions of their life at sea.

1.5. Methodology and sources

The dissertation deploys a qualitative approach, drawing on micro-level sources and narratives of Danish seafarers to shed light on their experiences of transition and transformation. The focus is on the

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[67] Beckert, chapter 7?

seafarers' experiences, interpretations and the complex interplay between structure and agency in shaping change in the maritime world. The aim is to contribute to a deeper understanding of the experiences of seafarers during the technological shift from sail to steam and the role of technology in shaping experience and social structures. The deployed methodology is a microhistorical approach "from below" through the narrative experiences of the seafarers themselves.

In reading the sources, one is first struck by the monotony of seafaring life in the narrated experiences of the seafarers. The weather, the work, and the food are standard, often seemingly redundant reference points in any seafarer's narrative. However, subtle changes in daily life and labour appear when reading with more attention to detail. Such sensitivity towards the texts pointed me to significant transformations in authority, the theme of article three, and time and temporality, the theme of article four.

I follow an interpretative hermeneutical approach focused on *meaning* in working with historical sources.[68] This involves a rigorous and critical analysis of the source in its historical and cultural context, emphasising an understanding of the author's intention, purpose, perspectives, and biases that may have informed and influenced the historical text. With this approach, I emphasise the historical sources as products of a specific time and place and the importance of the social, economic, political, and cultural context in which they were produced.[69]

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[68] Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Wahrheit Und Methode - Grundzüge Einer Philosophischen Hermeneutik* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1960); Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, Second Edition Revised (New York and London: continuum, 2003).
[69] Matthias Kipping, R. Daniel Wadhwani, and Marcelo Bucheli, 'Analysing and Interpreting Historical Sources: A Basic Methodology', in *Organizations in Time: History, Theory, Methods*, ed. Marcelo Bucheli and R. Daniel Wadhwani (Oxford: Oxford Univarsity Press, 2014), 305–30; See also forthcoming book S. Decker, W. Foster, and E. Giovannoni, eds., *Handbook of Historical Methods for Management* (Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2023), https://www.e-

This aspect of the hermeneutical approach has been central to my research since individual biases and perspectives shape and reveal *structure in agency* and *agency in structure*, the main analytical focus of this dissertation.

My primary empirical material consists of sources that can be described as "ego-documents," defined in my first article, as "sources that reveal the historical self as a thinking and feeling being in the world (agency in structure) or unveil the impact of social norms and relationships on the historical self (structure in agency)."[70] In the second article, these ego-documents are in the shape of a public debate in a local newspaper supported by autobiographical notes and letters from a key protagonist in the debate. The third and fourth articles deploy ego-documents in the form of autobiographical narratives and diaries from Danish seafarers who experienced the transition from sail to steam.

In collecting the source material, I identified and consulted a sizable number of published memoirs and autobiographies from Danish seafarers held in The Maritime Museum of Denmark's research library. Many of these were initially manuscripts or diaries collected by Danish museums that cover maritime history and heritage, including the Maritime Museum of Denmark. Notably, with the rising interest in maritime ethnography, many of these manuscripts have been transcribed and published in the last 30 to 40 years. A collective bibliography of these Danish publications is attached as Appendix A.

I have also used The Maritime Museum of Denmark's sizable archival collection of unpublished letters, diaries, and autobiographical manuscripts from Danish seafarers. I have attached a separate bibliography of these sources in Appendix B. One example is Emil Heinrich Mathiesen's calendar or journal, covering 1904 to 1928. The

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elgar.com/shop/gbp/handbook-of-historical-methods-for-management-9781800883734.html.

[70] Tinning and Lubinski, 'Ego-Documents in Management and Organisational History', 173.

diary consists of a calendar where every date has entries for events that took place on that date over several years.[71] Another example is the Danish seafarer Christian Borgland's original typewritten manuscript (dated July 1953) for his published memoir, "*Gennem Storm og Stille*", published by The National Museum of Denmark in 1956.[72]

Sources from the collections of other Danish museums, such as The National Museum of Denmark, Marstal Søfartsmuseum, and Museum Sønderjylland, have also been analysed. As mentioned, many of these have been published in printed versions, often with extensive biographical notes and references from descendants or archivists.

Taken together, these sources allow me to follow individual and collective experiences. The many different ego-documents available give opportunities for triangulation to detect similarities between accounts but also, just as importantly, identify divergent accounts and interpretations. My goal is not to arrive at a universal truth but to follow lived experiences that are, by definition, subjective and deeply contextual. Yet, my hermeneutic approach allows me to study each source in the context in which it was produced and by reflecting on the worldview, biases, and blind spots of the respective author.

These sources certainly have some limitations. Several of them are retrospective, even nostalgic accounts that reinterpret lived experiences. I counter this bias with detailed historical source criticism. However, there still is an overrepresentation of narrative accounts focussing on sailing ships. This is not least because a considerable effort was made to collect oral histories and ego-documents from this group of seafarers, mainly because of the impression that the sailor and sailing

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[71] Emil Heinrich Mathiesen, 'Arkivalie - Dagbog/Kalender for Emil Heinrich Mathiesen, 1904-1928' (Manuscript, The Martime Museum of Denmark: 2007:0107, n.d.).
[72] Christian Borgland, 'Gennem Storm og Stille - En gammel dansk matros' erindringer [Through Storm and Calm - An Old Danish Sailor's Memoires]' (Manuscript, The Maritime Museum of Denmark, July 1953); Christian Borgland, *Gennem Storm Og Stille - En Sømands Erindringer*, ed. David Yde-Andersen, Livet i Danmark 1850-1950 (Copenhagen: Nationalmuseet, 1954).

ship experience would be lost.[73] I worked with this limitation by expecting nostalgic accounts of the sailing experience and contextualizing these. But also by paying close attention to those accounts that encompassed experiences with both maritime technologies. In many national contexts, ego-documents authors tend to come from the more educated group of seafarers. Fortunately, literacy rates in Denmark were high, and my body of sources reflects a diverse range of socioeconomic backgrounds. In addition to my paper discussing ego-documents and their use, each empirical article has a methodology section that further explains the specific sources I use and their limitations.

1.6. Big questions and microhistory: maritime and global history

Maritime history is relevant to historical and business research beyond the community of scholars writing about sailors, ships, and the deep blue sea. Since the global turn in the 1980s, historical scholarship has not just approached its topic from a more globalized perspective but has also emphasised connections and entanglements. The emerging field of global history ought to find an obvious and natural ally in maritime history – at least in theory. Ingo Heidbrink argues that "traditional regionally based sub-divisions of historical research do not generally apply" to maritime history, suggesting a seamless link to global and world history.[74] Yet, so far and maybe counter-intuitively, global and maritime history

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[73] Henningsen, 'Sømandsliv Ombord Og i Land. Kilder Og Indordningssystemer', 127.
[74] Ingo Heidbrink, 'Closing the "Blue Hole": Maritime History as a Core Element of Historical Research', *International Journal of Maritime History* 29, no. 2 (1 May 2017): 327, https://doi.org/10.1177/0843871417695474.

cooperations are still rare (for three notable exceptions, see Paine 2013[75] Mann 2011[76] and Abulafia 2019[77]).

Critics like Lewis R. Fischer suggest that one of the reasons for this disconnect may be that world and global history are themselves broad umbrella terms.[78] The field is still searching for an identity, developing paradigms and experimenting with diverse approaches. Yet, maritime history must also do its homework to use its full potential. Few activities and experiences are as well documented as maritime trade and industry. Yet maritime historians have not always leveraged this advantage related to the availability of sources to the fullest, not least because they have to some extent, shied away from methodological debates and interactions with other disciplines.[79]

In this dissertation, I have foregrounded the need to rebalance agency and structure in maritime history, which is one of the central challenges of historical research. This matters, as I show, for our understanding of the process of transitioning from sail to steam technology. Yet it also points towards engagement with other large-scale transformations on a global scale: digitisation, new models of organizing work, transformed supply chains, and environmental degradation, to name just a few.

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[75] Lincoln Paine, *The Sea and Civilization. A Maritime History of the World* (New York: Vintage Books, 2013), https://www.plusbog.dk/the-sea-and-civilization-lincoln-p-paine-lincoln-paine-
9781782393580?affiliate=6433&gad_source=401841&gclid=Cj0KCQjwgLOiBhC7ARIs
AIeetVCrR2j6oUqT9-ImYUUn-
JgTbhZmKpw8HUZL8Z97DTOcLwD2iEfV9o4aAjrREALw_wcB.
[76] Charles C. Mann, *1493: Uncovering the New World Columbus Created* (New York: Knopf, 2011).
[77] David Abulafia, *The Boundless Sea: A Human History of the Oceans*, Illustrated edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019).
[78] Lewis R Fischer, 'The Future Course of Maritime History', *International Journal of Maritime History* 29, no. 2 (1 May 2017): 357,
https://doi.org/10.1177/0843871417695493.
[79] Fischer, 'The Future Course of Maritime History'; Jari Ojala and Stig Tenold,
'Maritime History: A Health Check', *International Journal of Maritime History* 29, no. 2
(1 May 2017): 344–54, https://doi.org/10.1177/0843871417695490.

Microhistory as a methodology is well-positioned to explore these global challenges in new and innovative ways. It empowers the scholar to change the scale of the study – "zoom in" and "zoom out" – to create bottom-up, empirically thick descriptions that foster an understanding of the whole. Importantly, it challenges *a priori* categories and periodisations by following the actors through the sources and having interpretations emerge from the sources themselves.[80] This reveals the global at the level of individual agency, offering a different view into global change processes. This dissertation's exploration of the transition from sail to steam is just one example of how to use this approach. Circulation and global connectedness, intertwined experiences and entanglements as seen and experienced by the actors paint a picture that differs markedly from existing maritime history. Like in an impressionistic painting, the dots and brush strokes that reveal little in isolation come together in a global history that acknowledges human agency in structure and reveals the impact of structure on human agency. This is a valid starting point for a global maritime history that is open and accommodating to neighbouring fields and collaborations if they serve historical and business research more broadly

1.7. Ṇotes on translation, language, and references

This dissertation contains my English translations of texts and historical material originally written in Danish. However, translations can be challenging to produce accurately, as words and phrases often have multiple meanings and connotations that can be difficult to convey in another language. Furthermore, even as a native Danish speaker, the original Danish texts are historical sources and thus temporally and

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[80] John-Paul A Ghobrial, 'Introduction: Seeing the World like a Microhistorian*', *Past & Present* 242, no. Supplement_14 (1 November 2019): 1–22, https://doi.org/10.1093/pastj/gtz046; Sigurður Gylfi Magnússon, 'Far-Reaching Microhistory: The Use of Microhistorical Perspective in a Globalized World', *Rethinking History* 21, no. 3 (3 July 2017): 312–41, https://doi.org/10.1080/13642529.2016.1252540.

culturally separated from me as a human and historian. Many of the original Danish texts are narratives that incorporate experiences, feelings, emotions, and cultural nuances. In my translations, I have aspired to convey more than just the factual context and meaning of the text but also the often more subtle emotional, cultural, and literary qualities of a particular text. I have done this by acknowledging that the choice of words and phrases can impact the meaning and tone of the translation and by remaining acutely aware that my translation may not capture all the nuances and subtleties of the original. Furthermore, I have endeavoured to render the translation as close as possible to the sometimes archaic wording of the original text and attempted to convey the fundamental meaning of the original text as close to its own literary and cultural context as possible.

The main part of this dissertation uses British grammar. However, article 1 (chapter 2) retains US grammar as in its published version. The references follow the Chicago Manual of Style (17th edition) with full footnotes and a collected bibliography.

1.8. Overview of the four articles of the dissertation

My research findings are presented here in four articles (for an overview, see Table 1-1). Three articles have already been published, while the fourth is pending review.

The first article, co-authored with Professor Christina Lubinski, engages methodologically with the category of historical sources I most use: ego-documents. The article relates my analysis of these sources to a long tradition in Dutch and German academia, reinvigorated by the cultural turn in historical sciences and micro-historical research. The category ego-documents that my co-author and I discuss in this article defines these sources with reference to their usefulness in the analysis of structure and agency and explores their potential role in future history and management research. The article

underwent a double-blind peer-review process and was published in *Management & Organizational History* in the December 2022 print version.

My second article explores the role of imagined futures in a traditional maritime community in Denmark during the transition from sail to steam. Inspired by Jens Beckert's monograph *Imagined Futures*, I discuss a public debate about this transition, the individual (and conflicting) voices in the debate, and their impact on community members' professional and personal lives. In essence, different versions of desirable and probable futures circulated within this community, each relating differently to the past and the contemporaneous present. This article has been double-blind peer-reviewed and published online (ahead of print) in *Business History* as part of a special issue on "Entrepreneurship and Transformations".

The third article explores the changing configuration and conceptualization of authority in the transition from sail to steam and empirically analyses how it affected power relationships at sea. Like time and temporality, power and authority have been of particular interest to microhistorical approaches, and the article discusses how steam propulsion technology changed and re-configured the authority, role, and profession of the sea captain. This article has been through editorial and double-blind peer review and will be published as a chapter in the forthcoming anthology, *The Transformation of Maritime Professions. Old and New Jobs in European Shipping Industries, c.1850-2000,* edited by Karel Davids and Joost Schokkenbroek. The anthology is published as part of the *Palgrave Studies in Economic History* series published by Palgrave Macmillan.

The fourth and final article explores changing concepts of time and temporality at sea and seafarers' experiences with changing time regimes and temporality in the transition from sail to steam. The article is framed as an extension and critique of E. P. Thompson's analysis of work relations in factories during industrialization. It explores

aspects of industrialization in the maritime sector that have been less explored in historical research. The manuscript has been submitted to the journal *Enterprise & Society*.

Each of the four articles deploys a specific theoretical and methodological approach, described in more detail in the respective articles. Collectively, they discuss the transition from sail to steam from a microhistorical, agency-in-structure and structure-in-agency perspective, providing new insights into the existing historiography.

Table 1-1: Overview of the four articles of the dissertation

Chapter	Author (Year)	Title
2	Tinning, M., & Lubinski, C. (2022).	Ego-documents in management and organizational history. *Management & Organizational History: 17*(3-4), 166–188. https://doi.org/10.1080/17449359.2022.2158107
3	Tinning, M. (Forthcoming-a).	Imagined futures of sail and steam - The role of community in envisioning entrepreneurial ventures. *Business History (online first)*. https://doi.org/10.1080/00076791.2022.2070610
4	Tinning, M. (Forthcoming-b).	Reconfiguring Authority at Sea: Steamships and Their Captains in a Danish Context', in *The Transformation of Maritime Professions - Old and New Jobs in European Shipping Industries, 1850-2000*, ed. Karel Davids and Joost Schokkenbroek, Palgrave Studies in Economic History (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, Forthcoming June 2023).
5	Tinning, M. (submitted)	Time at Sea - Steamships, Time and Seafaring Labour. Submitted to *Enterprise & Society*.

Chapter 2. Ego-documents in management and organizational history

2.1. Abstract

The vibrant exchange between history and organization studies has triggered major debates on engaging historiography and theorizing with history. By comparison, studies of historical methods have received less attention. We argue that one missing debate concerns different typologies of sources, which facilitate systematic comparative analysis and interpretation. Specifically, we introduce the category 'ego-documents', which we define as 'sources that reveal the historical self as a thinking and feeling being in the world (agency in structure) or unveil the impact of social norms and relationships on the historical self (structure in agency).' We review the history of the term ego-documents and debate the virtues and challenges of using it in management and organizational history. We then distinguish four uses of ego- documents and explicate their sources and purposes based on articles published in Management and Organizational History.

2.2. Introduction

The so-called 'historic turn'[81] has commenced a vibrant exchange between history and organization studies.[82] In this debate, scholars have highlighted the need for 'historiographical reflexivity'[83] and 'dual integrity'[84] to facilitate genuine interdisciplinary exchange. Decker, Hassard, and Rowlinson specifically define historiographical reflexivity as engaging with history as both a way of theorizing and a repertoire of methods for researching the past.[85] However, so far, the emphasis on

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[81] Peter Clark and Michael Rowlinson, 'The Treatment of History in Organisation Studies: Towards an "Historic Turn"?', *Business History* 46, no. 3 (1 July 2004): 331–52, https://doi.org/10.1080/0007679042000219175; Charles Booth and Michael Rowlinson, 'Management and Organizational History: Prospects', *Management & Organizational History* 1, no. 1 (1 February 2006): 5–30, https://doi.org/10.1177/1744935906060627; Albert J. Mills et al., 'Re-Visiting the Historic Turn 10 Years Later: Current Debates in Management and Organizational History – an Introduction', *Management & Organizational History* 11, no. 2 (2 April 2016): 67–76, https://doi.org/10.1080/17449359.2016.1164927.

[82] R. Daniel Wadhwani and Geoffrey Jones, 'Schumpeter's Plea: Historical Reasoning in Entrepreneurship Theory and Research', in *Organizations in Time: History, Theory, Methods*, ed. Marcelo Bucheli and R. Daniel Wadhwani (Oxford University Press, 2014), 192–216, https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199646890.003.0008; Gabrielle Durepos, Ellen C. Shaffner, and Scott Taylor, 'Developing Critical Organizational History: Context, Practice and Implications', *Organization* 28, no. 3 (1 May 2021): 449–67, https://doi.org/10.1177/1350508419883381.

[83] Stephanie Decker, John Hassard, and Michael Rowlinson, 'Rethinking History and Memory in Organization Studies: The Case for Historiographical Reflexivity', *Human Relations* 74, no. 8 (1 August 2021): 1123–55, https://doi.org/10.1177/0018726720927443.

[84] Mairi Maclean, Charles Harvey, and Stewart R. Clegg, 'Conceptualizing Historical Organization Studies', *Academy of Management Review* 41, no. 4 (October 2016): 609–32, https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2014.0133; Behlül Üsdiken and Alfred Kieser, 'Introduction: History in Organisation Studies', *Business History* 46, no. 3 (1 July 2004): 321–30, https://doi.org/10.1080/0007679042000219166.

[85] Decker, Hassard, and Rowlinson, 'Rethinking History and Memory in Organization Studies', 1124.

historical theories[86] and historiography[87] has by far surpassed the interest in historical methods. Because debates about historical methods in organization studies have evolved more slowly, calls for explicating and enhancing methodological pluralism continue to persist.[88] A few valuable methodological introductions to the work of historians in the language of organization studies exist[89], and a novel handbook of research methods is currently in preparation.[90] Much progress has also been made in critically reflecting on the institution of the archive[91],

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[86] Andrew B. Hargadon and R. Daniel Wadhwani, 'Theorizing with Microhistory', *Academy of Management Review*, 14 June 2022, https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2019.0176; Michael Rowlinson, John Hassard, and Stephanie Decker, 'Research Strategies for Organizational History: A Dialogue Between Historical Theory and Organization Theory', *Academy of Management Review* 39, no. 3 (July 2014): 250–74, https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2012.0203; Paul C. Godfrey et al., 'What Is Organizational History? Toward a Creative Synthesis of History and Organization Studies', *Academy of Management Review* 41, no. 4 (October 2016): 590–608, https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2016.0040.

[87] Clark and Rowlinson, 'The Treatment of History in Organisation Studies'; Decker, Hassard, and Rowlinson, 'Rethinking History and Memory in Organization Studies'; Anna Greenwood and Andrea Bernardi, 'Understanding the Rift, the (Still) Uneasy Bedfellows of History and Organization Studies', *Organization* 21, no. 6 (1 November 2014): 907–32, https://doi.org/10.1177/1350508413514286.

[88] Wim Van Lent and Gabrielle Durepos, 'Nurturing the Historic Turn: "History as Theory" versus "History as Method"', *Journal of Management History* 25, no. 4 (1 January 2019): 429–43, https://doi.org/10.1108/JMH-03-2019-0017; Stephanie Decker, Matthias Kipping, and R. Daniel Wadhwani, 'New Business Histories! Plurality in Business History Research Methods', *Business History* 57, no. 1 (2 January 2015): 30–40, https://doi.org/10.1080/00076791.2014.977870.

[89] Kipping, Wadhwani, and Bucheli, 'Analysing and Interpreting Historical Sources: A Basic Methodology'; R. Daniel Wadhwani and Stephanie Decker, 'Clio's Toolkit: The Practice of Historical Methods in Organization Studies', in *The Routledge Companion to Qualitative Research in Organization Studies* (Routledge, 2017); R. Daniel Wadhwani et al., 'Context, Time, and Change: Historical Approaches to Entrepreneurship Research', *Strategic Entrepreneurship Journal* 14, no. 1 (2020): 3–19, https://doi.org/10.1002/sej.1346.

[90] Decker, Foster, and Giovannoni, *Handbook of Historical Methods for Management*.

[91] Stephanie Decker, 'The Silence of the Archives: Business History, Post-Colonialism and Archival Ethnography', *Management & Organizational History* 8, no. 2 (1 May 2013): 155–73, https://doi.org/10.1080/17449359.2012.761491; Andrew Popp and Susanna Fellman, 'Power, Archives and the Making of Rhetorical Organizational Histories: A Stakeholder Perspective', *Organization Studies* 41, no. 11 (1 November 2020): 1531–49, https://doi.org/10.1177/0170840619879206; Amon Barros, Adéle de

which provided significant impulses to methodological debates in the field.

Yet, debates about specific genres of sources and how to use them are still limited. The science of the sources has largely been kept out of historical organization studies.[92] This is unfortunate because the remnants of the past that historical scholars use, how we order, classify, and read them, are inextricably intertwined with the interpretations of the past that historical organization scholars have so far prioritized. Specifically, typologies that divide sources not just by genre but by how they can be used and what purpose such analysis can have in facilitating systematic comparative analysis. Such source typologies have been a pillar of the historical profession since at least the nineteenth century[93] but rarely feature in historical organization studies.

This article aims to introduce, define, and discuss one such group of sources: ego- documents. Given the interest that historical organization scholars have expressed in questions of memory and history[94] as well as in microhistory as a form of theorizing[95], we believe that a discussion of ego-documents as sources in which a historical self voluntarily or involuntarily shows itself provides an important complement to these streams of research. The classification ego-documents highlights how sources of different genres – such as

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Toledo Carneiro, and Sergio Wanderley, 'Organizational Archives and Historical Narratives: Practicing Reflexivity in (Re)Constructing the Past from Memories and Silences', *Qualitative Research in Organizations and Management: An International Journal* 14, no. 3 (1 January 2018): 280–94, https://doi.org/10.1108/QROM-01-2018-1604.

[92] M. Bentley, 'The Turn Towards "Science": Historians Delivering Untheorized Truth', in *The SAGE Handbook of Historical Theory*, ed. N. Partner and S. Foot (London: SAGE Publications, 2013), 10–22; M. Howell and W. Previnier, *From Reliable Sources: An Introduction to Historical Methods* (Ithaca, London: Cornell University Press, 2001).

[93] Howell and Previnier, *From Reliable Sources: An Introduction to Historical Methods*, 1.

[94] Decker, Hassard, and Rowlinson, 'Rethinking History and Memory in Organization Studies'.

[95] Hargadon and Wadhwani, 'Theorizing with Microhistory', 14 June 2022.

autobiographies, diaries, letters, and collections of photographs, to name but a few – together help us see the historical self and its evolving forms of self-expression. While all sources give some clues about their creator(s), a discussion of ego-documents emphasizes not just the source itself but also how scholars approach it, with the aim to learn more about subjective historical experiences and memories and ask how actors express themselves. Seeing different types of ego-documents together, beyond genre distinctions, also allows scholars to explore periods in time when the expression of the self has fundamentally changed, a fact that reflects not just in one type of source but in different self-expressions. A study of only one genre of sources would miss the bigger picture of the interconnected evidence in a system of self-expression potentially more revealing of the self than any particular genre in isolation. One of the strengths of the term ego- documents is that it facilitates the 'seeing together' of different types of sources, transcending narrow genre considerations to reveal more comprehensive changes in how actors express themselves. With the discussion of ego-documents, we add to a hopefully growing body of work debating historical methods and, in particular, the science of the sources.

In the first part of the article, we define ego-documents by reviewing the conceptual history of the term, its foundational assumptions, and its relationship to adjacent typologies of sources, specifically autobiography, life-writings, and 'Selbstzeugnisse' [testimonies of the self]. We conclude this section with our own definition of ego-documents as sources that reveal the historical self as a thinking and feeling being in the world (*agency in structure*) or unveil the impact of social norms and relationships on the historical self (*structure in agency*). We arrived at this definition inspired by prior uses of ego-documents in historical organization studies and ongoing debates about the difference between history and memory.[96] We also learned

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[96] Decker, Hassard, and Rowlinson, 'Rethinking History and Memory in Organization Studies'.

from the existing literature on ego-documents about the role of structure and agency when approaching such sources.[97] Our definition reflects our reading of these considerations.

In the second part of the article, we focus specifically on the use of ego-documents in historical organization studies. We discuss the challenging notions of 'self' and 'truth' when working with ego-documents, arguing that reducing ego-documents to mere containers of historical facts strips them of the web of meanings they reveal on an individual and collective level. We analyzed all articles published in Management and Organizational History (MOH) in the last decade to exemplify different uses of ego-documents (even if the author did not describe their sources as ego-documents). We based this exploration on articles in MOH because we see the journal as one platform dedicated to discussions of historical organization studies and found that ego-documents were indeed widely used in different ways. Based on this analysis of existing scholarship, we develop a classification of four approaches to ego-documents, explicating which ego- documents scholars use, how they interpret them, and for what purpose. We conclude by highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of ego-documents and anticipating potential future challenges for this category of sources.

2.3. What are ego-documents? Reviewing and defining the term

Sources revealing a 'self' have long been a central concern in history. As Jeremy Popkin posits, "Every historian knows the frustration of painstakingly putting together the story of some past event and still feeling, when all the documents have been wrung dry and every detail fitted into place, that something is missing: a sense of what the protagonists were thinking and feeling, of what their actions meant to

them."[98] We experienced this ourselves in our work on everyday shopfloor interactions between steelworkers[99] and in historical analysis of the maritime industry and seafaring labor.[100] The thinking and feeling actor, her experiences and thoughts, provide a unique perspective on the historical event that differs from documentary evidence. Yet, the term 'ego-documents' to collectively describe those sources revealing historical actors' subjective experiences and interpretations was not used until the early 1950s and has since then been debated primarily in Dutch and German language publications, with only minor interest from English-speaking academics.

2.4. Origin of the term ego-documents

The term 'ego-documents' was first coined by Dutch historian Jacques Presser who introduced it in his teaching in the academic year 1951–52. He eventually published an entry on ego-documents in a Dutch encyclopedia in 1958, where he defined them as "those historical sources in which the researcher is faced with an "I", or occasionally (Caesar[101],

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[98] J.D. Popkin, *History, Historians, & Autobiography* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005), 6.

[99] C. Lubinski, *Mikropolitik Und Flexible Spezialisierung: Das Beispiel Der Mechanischen Werkstätten Der Handelsgesellschaft Jacobi, Haniel Und Huyssen (JHH) Im 19. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen: Univ-Verl, 2009).

[100] Morten Tinning, 'Imagined Futures of Sail and Steam - The Role of Community in Envisioning Entrepreneurial Ventures', *Business History* ahead-of-print, no. ahead-of-print (2022): 1–21, https://doi.org/10.1080/00076791.2022.2070610; Morten Tinning, 'Reconfiguring Authority at Sea: Steamships and Their Captains in a Danish Context, c. 1850-1950', in *The Transformation of Maritime Professions - Old and New Jobs in European Shipping Industries, 1850-2000*, ed. Karel Davids and Joost Schokkenbroek, Palgrave Studies in Economic History (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2023); Morten Tinning, 'Time at Sea - Steamships, Time and Seafaring Labour' (Working Paper, Submitted to Enterprise & Society 2023).

[101] Jane P. Gardner, ed., *The Conquest of Gaul*, trans. S. A. Handford, Revised edition (London, England: Penguin Classics, 1983).

Henry Adams[102]) a "he", as the writing and describing subject with a continuous presence in the text." Toward the end of his career, in 1969, Presser described the category even more succinctly as including "those documents in which an ego deliberately or accidentally discloses or hides itself."[103] These were the first definitions of the term ego- documents (for an overview of definitions, see Table 2-1).

Presser's pioneering interest in historical actors' subjective experiences derived from his personal and professional biography. He began his career as a history teacher at a secondary school in Amsterdam. Because of his Jewish religion, he lost his job after the occupation of the Netherlands by Nazi Germany in 1940. Presser survived the occupation and WWII in hiding, while his wife Deborah was killed in an extermination camp. After the war ended, Presser became a lecturer and then a professor at the University of Amsterdam. In 1949, he was commissioned to write the history of the persecution of the Dutch Jews during the Nazi period. For this project, he engaged intensively with different types of sources, speaking to the thoughts, feelings, and subjective experiences of historical actors, which he later labeled ego-documents. In addition to being a professional historian and a pioneer in studying historical experiences and subjective interpretations, Presser was also a poet and novelist and, as such sensible to the aesthetics of his sources.[104]

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[102] Refering to H. Adams, *The Education of Henry Adams* (Boston: The Massachusetts Historical Society, 1918) written by the Bostonian Henry Adams in third-person narrative.

[103] Both quotes translated from the original Dutch by A. Baggerman and R.M. Dekker, 'Jacques Presser, Egodocuments and the Personal Turn in Historiography', *European Journal of Life Writing* 7 (2018): 93, https://doi.org/10.5463/ejlw.7.263.

[104] On Presser and his biography, see R. Dekker, 'Introduction', in *Egodocuments and History: Autobiographical Writing in Its Social Context Since the Middle Ages*, ed. R. Dekker (Hilversum: Verloren, 2002), 7–20; Baggerman and Dekker, 'Jacques Presser, Egodocuments and the Personal Turn in Historiography'; Benigna Von Krusenstjern, 'Was Sind Selbstzeugnisse?', *Historische Anthropologie* 2, no. 3 (December 1994): 462–71, https://doi.org/10.7788/ha.1994.2.3.462.

Table 2-1: Definitions of ego-documents in the literature, 1958—present.

Year	Reference	Definition or description of ego-documents
1958	(Presser, as quoted in Baggerman and Dekker 2018, 93)	'those historical sources in which the researcher is faced with an "I", or occasionally (Caesar, Henry Adams) a "he", as the writing and describing subject with a continuous presence in the text.' [Original in Dutch]
1969	(Presser, as quoted in Baggerman and Dekker 2018, 93)	'those documents in which an ego deliberately or accidentally discloses or hides itself' [Original in Dutch]
1996	(Schulze 1996, 14, 21)	'sources that provide information about a person's self-view [. . .], in which a person provides information about the self, whether this is done voluntarily [. . .] or necessitated by other circumstances' [Original in German]
1997	(Burke 1997)	'what some historians call the "ego-document" (a broader category including diaries, journals, memoirs and letters) is potentially at least even more revealing of the self.'
2010	(Fulbrook and Rublack 2010, 263)	'a source or "document"—understood in the widest sense—providing an account of, or revealing privileged information about, the "self" who produced it. [. . .] The use of ego-documents allows us, in particular, to focus on a key issue that might conveniently be summarized as that of "structures and subjectivities".'

2012	(Malena 2012, 97)	'any type of text in which an author or authoress, deliberately or unintentionally writes about his/her acts, thoughts and feelings.'
2013	(Magnússon 2013, 215, 7)	'ego-documents, the sources in which people's personal voices can be heard most clearly.'
2016	(Mascuch, Dekker, and Baggerman 2016, 11)	'a broad category comprising several forms of autobiographical texts, including autobiographies, memoirs, diaries, travel journals, and personal letters.'
2019	(Depkat 2019, 264)	'In its narrowest definition, therefore, the term "egodocuments" can be used interchangeably with "selfnarrative", "Selbstzeugnis", or "self life writing" [. . .] In its broadest definition, advocated by Schulze, the term "egodocuments" is a catchall category that is so broad that it hardly means anything.'

Because of the specific research context in which Presser first developed the notion of ego-documents (experiences of holocaust survivors), his use of the term always included verbal articulations of the self as well as remarkable silences – experiences that actors could not put into words – both of which he found equally insightful for historical analysis.

In Presser's oeuvre, the category ego-documents remained a broad umbrella term designed to show similarities between different types of sources that together disclose subjective experiences. Presser's articulated goal was first and foremost to "confront the reader continually with the experiences, thoughts and feelings of individual persons"[105],

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[105] Original in Dutch, translated in Baggerman and Dekker, 'Jacques Presser, Egodocuments and the Personal Turn in Historiography', 92.

thus foreshadowing one of the significant objectives of historical scholarship in the context of the 'cultural turn'.

2.5. Debating ego-document in the context of the cultural turn

The term ego-document remained in use in Dutch and German historical scholarship but only rose to prominence in the 1990s in the context of the 'cultural turn'.[106] Cultural history foregrounded the subjective dimension of history and asked how individuals and groups made sense of the world around them. This put a new spotlight on the self and the process of how individuals interpreted their life in an individual and collective process of meaning-making. While ego-documents were previously often dismissed as unreliable for reconstructing experiences and as 'too subjective' - one of the critiques toward Presser's pioneering attempts of using them[107] – it was precisely the subjectivity of these sources that put them front and center in the analysis of cultures, mentalities, history from below, everyday history, and microhistory.[108] The newly incited debates about ego- documents were particularly explicit in early-modern history, where the cultural turn was most pronounced. Here, ego-documents promised an opportunity "to study emerging notions of subjectivity and personhood for a time period to which most of the concepts crucial to modern autobiography do not apply."[109]

Given the importance of these sources in the context of the

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[106] L. Hunt, ed., *The New Cultural History* (Berkeley: University of California Berkeley, 1989); Peter Burke, *What Is Cultural History?* (Malsen, MA: Polity Press, 2008).
[107] Dekker, 'Introduction', 9.
[108] C. Ulbrich, K. von Greyers, and L. Heiligensetzer, 'Introduction', in *Mapping the 'I': Research on Self-Narrtives in Germany and Switzerland*, ed. C. Ulbrich, K. von Greyers, and L. Heiligensetzer (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2015), 1–12; J.D. Popkin, 'History, Historians, and Autobiography Revisited', *A/B: Auto/Biography Studies* 32, no. 3 (2017): 693–98,
https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/epdf/10.1080/08989575.2017.1338028?needAccess=true&role=button.
[109] V. Depkat, '2.8 Ego-Documents', in *Handbook of Autobiography/Autofiction*, ed. Wagner-Egelhaaf (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019), 262.

research questions asked by cultural historians, it is surprising that the term ego-document, which became very prominent in Dutch- and German-speaking scholarship, received little recognition from British and American researchers.[110] While individual scholars, like Peter Burke, occasionally used the term in English, often in relation to autobiographical writing, it never caught on or was systematically debated.[111] The existing but limited engagement with the term in English was initiated and driven by German and Dutch scholars, for example, in a 2010 special issue of the journal *German History*.[112] While the German term 'Ego-Dokumente' translates easily, it was neither widely used nor systematically debated in English.

One reason for this lack of engagement is the existence of adjacent concepts with similar or greater currency, most prominently 'autobiography', 'life-writing', and in German also 'Selbstzeugnisse' [testimonies of the self]. The most established competitive term in English is arguably autobiography. The term autobiography describes a "retrospective prose narrative produced by a real person concerning his own existence, focusing on his individual life, in particular on the development of his personality."[113] There is a strong tradition in the historical profession to reflect on autobiography as a genre, including the danger of falling prey to the " 'dream,' . . . the utopian promise of transparency"[114] and the critical interpretation of autobiography as a

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[110] Kaspar von Greyerz, 'Ego-Documents: The Last Word?', *German History* 28, no. 3 (1 September 2010): 274, https://doi.org/10.1093/gerhis/ghq064; Leonieke Vermeer, 'Stretching the Archives. Ego-Documents and Life Writing Research in the Netherlands: State of the Art', *BMGN - Low Countries Historical Review* 135, no. 1 (26 March 2020): 31–69, https://doi.org/10.18352/bmgn-lchr.10784.

[111] Peter Burke, 'Representations of the Self from Petrarch to Descartes', in *Rewriting the Self: Histories from the Renaissance to the Present*, ed. R. Porter (London & New York: Routledge, 1997), 17–28.

[112] Fulbrook and Rublack, 'In Relation'.

[113] P. Lejeune, 'The Autobiographical Pact', in *On Autobiography*, ed. P. Lejeune (Minnesote: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 4.

[114] N.D. Paige, *Being Interior: Autobiography and the Contradiction of Modernity in Seventeenth-Century France* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), 13.

form of performance and technique of self-presentation.[115]

Yet, autobiography is also a narrowly defined term, which is why scholars have suggested different compound terms, such as autobiographical writing or autobiographical material, to expand its scope. Critics argue that the term autobiography is inadequate to capture the full range and the many different practices of revealing a historical self, thus signaling the need for a broader, more inclusive category. The newer term 'life-writing' was one response to this need. Smith and Watson define it as "a general term for writing that takes a life, one's own or another's, as its subject."[116] Depkat opines that ego-documents in a narrow definition are equivalent to life-writings, whereas he fears that even broader definitions of ego-documents are too expansive to be useful at all (see also Table 2-1).[117] While broader than autobiography, life-writing still retains focus on the span of a lifetime and the retrospective description of an unfolding life.

Whereas English-language research centers on the terms autobiography and life-writing, in German academia, the competing term Selbstzeugnisse [testimonies of the self] is also in circulation, with some scholars expressing an explicit preference for it over ego-documents. They articulate three main points of criticism toward ego-documents. First, some scholars hesitate to use the term 'ego' because of its proximity to Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis. They argue that historical sources cannot reveal the inner workings of an ego or find the term's application to earlier historical periods anachronistic.[118] Second, there is a concern that the umbrella category ego-documents, which combines various types of sources, may disguise genre differences, thus failing to

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[115] P. Burke, 'The Rhetoric of Autobiography in the Seventeenth Century', in *Touching the Past: Studies in the Historical Sociolinguistics of Ego-Documents*, ed. M. van der Wal and G. Rutten (Amsterdam, Netherlands: John Benjamins Publishing, 2013), 149–63; Popkin, 'History, Historians, and Autobiography Revisited'.

[116] S. Smith and J. Watson, *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives*, 2nd Ed. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 4.

[117] Depkat, '2.8 Ego-Documents', 264.

[118] von Greyerz, 'Ego-Documents', 280.

account for the differences between, for example, autobiographies, diaries, and letters.[119] Third, scholars have stressed that subjective ego-documents, not unlike literary pieces, need to remain open to conflicting interpretations.[120]

None of these concerns ultimately undermine the idea behind the category ego- documents, which is 'seeing together' different types of sources that reveal the historical self. However, they give important methodological pointers on how to define and use ego-documents. We take them here in turn. While the associations with psychoanalysis may be concerning to some, it is easy to relate the term 'ego' back to its original etymological meaning of 'I' as a conscious thinking and feeling self (Latin ego/Greek Εγώ) rather than focusing on the English language translation of Freud's 'Ich' to 'ego' as the part of the mind that mediates between the conscious and the unconscious. The expressed concerns about genre differences should form an important part of the source criticism explicated below that goes along with an academic use of ego-documents. It is necessary to carefully consider the genre of sources analyzed within a history of their usage and the limits of the interpretations they allow. Finally, the openness to conflicting interpretations can be achieved by providing scholars with the information needed to replicate historical research and re-read source material toward the most plausible explanation, as is the norm in historical scholarship. In sum, none of the concerns calls into question the use of the term ego-documents in management and organizational history. However, they indicate the need for a reliable definition to distinguish ego-documents qualitatively from other types of sources and guide their analysis.

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[119] Depkat, '2.8 Ego-Documents', 264.
[120] Fulbrook and Rublack, 'In Relation'.

2.6. What makes an ego-document? A definition

While the critique of the term does not rise to a foundational challenge to the category, it calls for a careful definition. If genre is insufficient for defining ego-documents, what are such sources' constitutive elements? Building on Presser, some scholars argue that any source expressing the self is an ego-document. However, such a broad definition is problematic because all sources speak to their creators to some extent.[121] Intuitively, one may be tempted to look for ego-documents among sources with an 'I', a first-person narrator or voice. While some scholars have indeed insisted on first-person narratives[122], we follow instead von Krusenstjern[123] and Baggerman[124], who argue that the question of how the self is articulated is less relevant than the act of explicit expression, which can be achieved in first or third-person voice.

Conversely, it would also be erroneous to assume that all first-person narratives are ego-documents. Sometimes the first-person account primarily serves a different purpose than revealing an ego or can even disguise it. For example, Gerhard Wolf shows for chronicles that the use of first-person narrative served the rhetorical function of increasing the plausibility of the story for the audience but was at the same time so formalized that it did not reveal the self of the author.[125] Thus, we conclude that whether the source is in first- or third-person voice is irrelevant to its character as an ego-document.

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[121] Krusenstjern, 'Was Sind Selbstzeugnisse?'
[122] M. van der Wal and G. Rutten, 'Ego-Documents in Historical-Sociolinguistic Perspective', in *Touching the Past: Studies in the Historical Sociolinguistics of Ego-Documents*, ed. M. van der Wal and G. Rutten (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing, 2013), 1–17.
[123] Krusenstjern, 'Was Sind Selbstzeugnisse?'
[124] A. Baggerman, 'Lost in Time: Temporal Discipline and Historical Awareness in Nineteenth-Century Dutch Egodocuments', in *Controlling Time and Shaping the Self: Developments in Auto-Biographical Writing Since the Sixteenth Century*, ed. A. Baggerman, R.M. Dekker, and M.J. Mascuch (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2011), 455–541.
[125] G. Wolf, *Von Der Chronik Zum Weltbuch* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014).

Because of the ongoing debates about definitions, many scholars using the term ego- documents so far relied in addition on a more detailed enumeration of the types of sources they describe with it Dekker[126], Fulbrook and Rublack[127], frequently including diaries, journals, letters, autobiographies, memoirs, oral history narratives, witness testimonies, or trial and court proceedings. However, while common, such listings are unsatisfactory in several respects. First, the itemized genres have themselves a history and are valued (and used) differently at different moments in time. They must be interpreted within the fads and fashions of the respective genre. Second, in many cases, sources of one genre, for example, letters or diaries, might but don't necessarily have to be ego-documents. Thus, the genre is less relevant to the revelation of the self than the actual content of the source and, importantly, the scholar's research question and approach. Thus, rather than equating any one genre a priori with ego-documents, it may be more fruitful to make the content of specific sources and the scholarly approach to them the decisive criteria. Third, while historiography has for long debated and described specific genres in isolation, such as autobiography[128], oral history[129], and diary[130], these studies do not

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[126] R. Dekker, 'Ego-Dokumente in Den Niederlanden Vom 16. Bis Zum 17. Jahrhundert', in *Ego-Dokumente: Annäherung an Den Menchen in Der Geshichte*, ed. W. Schulze (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1996), 33–57.

[127] Fulbrook and Rublack, 'In Relation'.

[128] Popkin, *History, Historians, & Autobiography*; Smith and Watson, *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives*; Burke, 'The Rhetoric of Autobiography in the Seventeenth Century'.

[129] A. Portelli, 'Oral History as Genre', in *Narrative and Genre*, ed. M. Chamberlain and P. Thompson (London & New York: Routledge, 1998), 23–45; Alistair Thomson, 'Four Paradigm Transformations in Oral History', *The Oral History Review* 34, no. 1 (1 January 2007): 49–70, https://doi.org/10.1525/ohr.2007.34.1.49; V. Giacomin, 'Perspectives on Oral History for Historical Research', in *Handbook of Historical Methods for Management*, ed. S. Decker, W. Foster, and E. Giovannoni (Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2023), 120–38, https://www.e-elgar.com/shop/gbp/handbook-of-historical-methods-for-management-9781800883734.html.

[130] M. Hewitt, 'Diary, Autobiography and the Practice of Life History', in *Life Writing and Victrorian Culture*, ed. Amigoni (London & New York: Routledge, 2017), 21–39; S.

explicate the commonalities between types of sources that reveal an ego or connect them. The promise of the category ego-document is precisely the seeing together, i.e. to stress what these different types of sources have in common for understanding a historical self beyond any genre specifics.

While the Dutch tradition of ego-documents focused first and foremost on the subjective experience of historical actors, the German early-modern historian Wilfried Schulze expanded the category in the 1990s to include involuntary or forced self-thematizations and, importantly, linked individual experiences to collective structures and socially-held interpretations.[131] He discussed the value of ego-documents to give, as best as possible, "direct access to individual and collective interpretations, valuations, and social knowledge."[132] Schulze was not just interested in subjective experiences, which was most important to the pioneering scholars in the field, but stressed his interest in the dynamic interplay between the world and the self, structure and agency. This is also the approach that, more recently, Fulbrook and Rublack have advocated for. Together, these authors foreground the potential of the category ego-documents to study "a key issue that might conveniently be summarized as that of structures and subjectivity."[133] While historical events can be better understood if they include an analysis of how they have been subjectively experienced, historians also care deeply about exploring how individual experiences are shaped by collective social structures, disclosing social structure in historical agency.

Building on this review of the prior debates about ego-documents, we propose a definition that focuses on expressions of the

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Sherman, *Telling Time: Clocks, Diaries, and English Diurnal Form, 1660-1785* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).
[131] W. Schulze, 'Ego-Dokumente: Annäherung and Den Menchen in Der Geschichte? Vorüberlegungen Für Die Tagung 'Ego-Dokumente', in *Ego-Dokumente: Annäherung and Den Menchen in Der Geschichte*, ed. W. Schulze (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1996), 11–30.
[132] Schulze, 13.
[133] Fulbrook and Rublack, 'In Relation', 263.

self and reflects how ego-documents incorporate the duality of agency and structure. Ego-documents, we posit, are sources that reveal the historical self as a thinking and feeling being in the world (*agency in structure*) or unveil the impact of social norms and relationships on the historical self (*structure in agency*). We include in this definition first and third-person accounts of different genres as well as voluntary, triggered, and forced self-thematizations if they have these constitutive qualities.

2.7. How to use ego-documents? Exploring the self in management and organizational history

While seeing different ego-documents together can be of great value to studying lived experiences and the dynamic interplay between the ego and the world, such sources need to be treated with care. As a community of practice, history-informed scholars will first engage in a thorough source criticism of ego-documents, exploring their provenience, authorship, intended target, and reasons for survival; and triangulate the ego-documents with other available remnants of the past.[134] Beyond such conventional source criticism, we discuss in this article why working with ego-documents in management and organizational history is promising and how it can be further refined.

2.8. The potential of ego-documents for management and organizational history

While the term ego-documents is not yet widely used in management and organizational history, the type of source and how scholars approach it is already central to many ongoing debates in the field. The journal MOH

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[134] Howell and Previnier, *From Reliable Sources: An Introduction to Historical Methods*; Kipping, Wadhwani, and Bucheli, 'Analysing and Interpreting Historical Sources: A Basic Methodology'.

is one of the main plenaries for discussions of the 'historic turn' in organization studies[135], facilitating interdisciplinary work between history and organization studies, dual integrity[136], and the fruitful exchange between both disciplines.[137] Recently, Decker, Hassard, and Rowlinson have explicated the often unarticulated but essential distinction between history and memory, clarifying that historical scholarship in organization studies is either focused on reconstructing the past (history) or on studying actors' recollections of it (memory).[138] They argue that both goals can be achieved by the use of historical archival sources or by studying individual and collective recollections.

We argue that both the study of memory and history in management and organizational history will benefit from an explicit discussion of ego-documents as a source. With a focus on memory, Decker, Hassard, and Rowlinson identify 'retrospective organizational memory' as a prominent approach in management and organizational history[139], not least in the context of 'rhetorical history'[140], 'uses of the past'[141], and narrative approaches to business history.[142] Here scholars

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[135] Clark and Rowlinson, 'The Treatment of History in Organisation Studies'; Booth and Rowlinson, 'Management and Organizational History'; Mills et al., 'Re-Visiting the Historic Turn 10 Years Later'.

[136] Maclean, Harvey, and Clegg, 'Conceptualizing Historical Organization Studies'.

[137] Durepos, Shaffner, and Taylor, 'Developing Critical Organizational History'.

[138] Decker, Hassard, and Rowlinson, 'Rethinking History and Memory in Organization Studies'.

[139] Decker, Hassard, and Rowlinson.

[140] Roy Suddaby, William M. Foster, and Trank Chris Quinn, 'Rhetorical History as a Source of Competitive Advantage', in *The Globalization of Strategy Research*, ed. Baum Joel A.C. and Joseph Lampel, vol. 27, Advances in Strategic Management (Emerald Group Publishing Limited, 2010), 147–73, https://doi.org/10.1108/S0742-3322(2010)0000027009.

[141] R. Daniel Wadhwani et al., 'History as Organizing: Uses of the Past in Organization Studies', *Organization Studies* 39, no. 12 (1 December 2018): 1663–83, https://doi.org/10.1177/0170840618814867.

[142] Per H. Hansen, 'Business History: A Cultural and Narrative Approach', *Business History Review* 86, no. 4 (December 2013): 693–717, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007680512001201; Mads Mordhorst, 'From Counterfactual History to Counternarrative History', *Management & Organizational History* 3, no. 1 (1 February 2008): 5–26, https://doi.org/10.1177/1744935908090995.

prioritize how history can be mobilized to advance a strategic agenda. Such an analysis can be done in the present, using historical narratives and artifacts as the object of study[143] or over time to understand the evolution of individual and collective memory using archival sources.[144] In both cases, ego-documents are preferred sources disclosing the memory of the self. Scholars have even argued that 'living history,' i.e. the historical narrative that is remembered, is that subset of history that eventually gets carried forward into collective memory[145], suggesting links to be explored between the individual memory and collective understandings of the past.[146] Investigating such claims requires an engagement with how individuals subjectively remember the past, connecting their lived experiences to more significant societal developments. These questions can be explored primarily with ego-documents that, by our definition, navigate the tension of subjective experience and collectively-held social structure.

With a focus on what Decker, Hassard, and Rowlinson call history[147], it is worth exploring the close link between ego-documents and microhistorical approaches.[148] Ego-documents rose to prominence on the coattail of the cultural turn and are closely related to the theoretical

[143] Mary Jo Hatch and Majken Schultz, 'Toward a Theory of Using History Authentically: Historicizing in the Carlsberg Group', *Administrative Science Quarterly* 62, no. 4 (1 December 2017): 657–97, https://doi.org/10.1177/0001839217692535.

[144] Christina Lubinski, 'From "History as Told" to "History as Experienced": Contextualizing the Uses of the Past', *Organization Studies* 39, no. 12 (1 December 2018): 1785–1809, https://doi.org/10.1177/0170840618800116.

[145] Roy Suddaby et al., 'Rhetorical History as Institutional Work', *Journal of Management Studies* 60, no. 1 (2023): 242–78, https://doi.org/10.1111/joms.12860.

[146] Per H. Hansen, *Danish Modern Furniture, 1930-2016: The Rise, Decline and Re-Emergence of a Cultural Market Category*, University of Southern Denmark Studies in History and Social Sciences 554 (Odense: University Press of Southern Denmark, 2018); Suddaby et al., 'Rhetorical History as Institutional Work'.

[147] Decker, Hassard, and Rowlinson, 'Rethinking History and Memory in Organization Studies'.

[148] S. Decker, 'Mothership Reconnection', in *The Routledge Companion to Management and Organizational History*, ed. Patricia Genoe McLaren, Albert J. Mills, and Terrance G. Weatherbee (Routledge, 2015), https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203550274.

approach of microhistory.[149] Both microhistory and ego-documents have lived experiences at their core. Inspired by anthropological research, microhistory explores previously rarely used sources (church records, trial recordings), the majority of which were used as ego-documents, to reconstruct a 'history from below'[150] or 'history of the everyday'[151] and sometimes with an explicit focus not just on experiences but also on feelings and emotions.[152]

Recently, Hargadon and Wadhwani have outlined microhistory as a way of theorizing in management and organization studies.[153] They show that microhistory deals with the close examination of granular sources capturing lived experiences, i.e. the understandings, actions, emotions, and worlds of historical actors in their context. The ultimate goal is to unveil – through an understanding of these micro-processes – broader historical developments, such as the rupture of significant technological developments[154], the transition from feudalism to

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[149] Ginzburg, Tedeschi, and Tedeschi, 'Microhistory : Two or Three Things That I Know about It Published'; G. Levi, 'On Microhistory', in *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*, ed. P. Burke (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), 93–113.

[150] E.P. Thompson, 'History From Below', *Times Literary Supplement*, 7 April 1966, 3345 edition.

[151] A. Lüdtke, *The History of Everyday Life: Reconstructing Historical Experiences and Ways of Life*, ed. W. Templer (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1995); John Brewer, 'Microhistory and the Histories of Everyday Life', *Cultural and Social History* 7, no. 1 (March 2010): 87–109, https://doi.org/10.2752/147800410X477359; Paul Steege et al., 'The History of Everyday Life: A Second Chapter', *The Journal of Modern History* 80, no. 2 (July 2008): 358–78, https://doi.org/10.1086/588855.

[152] Robin Holt and Andrew Popp, 'Emotion, Succession, and the Family Firm: Josiah Wedgwood & Sons', *Business History* 55, no. 6 (1 September 2013): 892–909, https://doi.org/10.1080/00076791.2012.744588; Sigurður Gylfi Magnússon, 'The Love Game as Expressed in Ego-Documents: The Culture of Emotions in Late Nineteenth Century Iceland', *Journal of Social History* 50, no. 1 (1 September 2016): 102–19, https://doi.org/10.1093/jsh/shv093.

[153] Hargadon and Wadhwani, 'Theorizing with Microhistory', 14 June 2022.

[154] Tinning, 'Imagined Futures of Sail and Steam - The Role of Community in Envisioning Entrepreneurial Ventures'.

capitalism[155], or the relationship between the global and the local.[156] "Microhistorical approach enables a researcher to integrate the micro temporal contextualization of actions, as experienced by subjects in their time, with resulting macro temporal consequences observed retrospectively by researchers."[157] By analyzing evidence of the lived experience, researchers can study actors in what they themselves perceive as their context, what we call '*agency in structure*', but also recognize and account for the ways that historical actors are shaped by their context, what we call '*structure in agency*'. Thus, a more deliberate discussion of ego-documents and their use has the potential to advance historical organization studies with a focus on both memory and history.

Moreover, the debates about ego-documents that have already taken place in other disciplines may offer fascinating new perspectives on management and organizational history. Recognizing ego-documents as a category that transcends the boundaries of any one genre creates the possibility of exploring networks of different types of sources to better understand the different but linked self-representations and experiences of an ego. Mark Dawson's work on Samuel Pepys, a 17th-century English naval administrator who produced a detailed diary, is inspiring in this way because he stresses the relevance of an intricate networked system of different types of sources, all contributing to a new form of personal accounting.[158] Financial ledgers, inventories of goods acquired, and catalogs of letters received and sent all emerged at the same historical moment, revealing not just a self but, more importantly, also a changing understanding of the documentation of the self. Similarly, Stuart Sherman analyzes how changes in the technology of measuring time

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[155] Alison K Smith, 'A Microhistory of the Global Empire of Cotton: Ivanovo, The "Russian Manchester"*', *Past & Present* 244, no. 1 (1 August 2019): 163–93, https://doi.org/10.1093/pastj/gtz017.

[156] Ghobrial, 'Introduction'.

[157] Hargadon and Wadhwani, 'Theorizing with Microhistory', 14 June 2022.

[158] Mark S. Dawson, 'Histories and Texts: Refiguring the Diary of Samuel Pepys', *The Historical Journal* 43, no. 2 (June 2000): 407–31, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0018246X99008894.

during the 1660s were intertwined with changing narratives and reflected a new way of engaging with the self in relation to time.[159] An analysis focused solely on one genre of sources would miss this bigger picture of the interrelated evidence in a more extensive system that is potentially more revealing of the self than any particular genre. We see the most significant potential of the term ego-documents in management and organizational history in its ability to transcend narrow genre considerations to reveal broader changes in how actors show their selves and for what purpose. We also believe that the focus on agency in structure and structure in agency, which researchers of ego-documents have previously highlighted, can trigger history-informed organization scholars to engage more explicitly with this tension in ego-documents and help broaden their uses of ego-documents.

2.9. Ṇavigating self and truths

One of the challenges when working with ego-documents is navigating the controversial notions of 'self' and 'truth'. Initially, the primary purpose of studying ego-documents was to gain access to subjective experiences of past events and their interpretations. Collecting ego-documents allowed historians to multiply perspectives and see together several, even contrasting, subjective experiences of events or processes. In the context of cultural history, microhistory, and people dealing with trauma, this was often motivated by giving a voice to underrepresented groups and speaking out for people that history had silenced. Doing so significantly increased the sophistication of historical debates about identity markers of the self, such as gender, race, or age, to name but a few.

Notably, the goal of studying ego-documents is not to arrive at 'truth' or to recover a more authentic voice of individuals. Rather the objective is to understand how people navigated their world, with its

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[159] Sherman, *Telling Time: Clocks, Diaries, and English Diurnal Form, 1660-1785.*

time-, class-, and gender-specific norms, demands, role expectations, and social relationships. That way, ego-documents give evidence for historical actors' creativity and, just as importantly, their delusions and destructive capacity.[160] This also reflects in the temporality of the accounts. Most conventional history takes place in a social, collective time. By contrast, ego-documents give their makers the creative freedom to choose alternative temporal frames based on their own life[161] or other triggering events. Reducing ego-documents to mere containers of historical facts strips them of the web of meanings they reveal on an individual and collective level.

Historians who engage with ego-documents do this to understand their historical actors' 'subjective truth,' i.e. what was authentic and meaningful to them. This can only be achieved if they also engage with narrative tropes and sociocultural context to understand their historical actors' world and process of sensemaking. A concern with language and rhetoric has been part of the discussion of the category ego-documents since its inception by Presser, who doubled as a poet. Doing justice to the rhetorical quality of ego-documents may require comparing accounts to other sets of ego-documents to determine how (a)typical plots and styles were. Helpful in this respect is determining why subjects write or speak. Baggerman shows, based on her collection of ego-documents, that there are at least three prevalent reasons for revealing the self in sources, i.e. apologizing for something, wanting to serve as an example, or passing on knowledge about past events or processes that were perceived as unique or significant.[162] Importantly, all ego-documents engage with the myth of the self to some extent. They may not only diverge from what happened or recount events that the ego could not have attended, but they also reflect the perception of a given

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[160] Fulbrook and Rublack, 'In Relation', 271–72.
[161] Popkin, *History, Historians, & Autobiography*.
[162] Baggerman, 'Lost in Time: Temporal Discipline and Historical Awareness in Nineteenth-Century Dutch Egodocuments', 486.

individual of his or her own life compared to other lives.

Finally, an explicit and critical discussion of ego-documents also puts the very idea of selfhood on the research agenda. What we perceive as the self (and if we perceive a self) is a historical construct with a history.[163] In this way, the ego-document is also part of a discourse that can be analyzed – using Foucault[164] – as a medium of communication, self-knowledge, and power. Foucault even explicitly addresses the 'technology of self' when he discusses the genealogy of the discourse of confession. The very idea of an autonomous individual with authentic experiences is an assumption that must be historically contextualized. It is neither a universal category nor independent of the specific historical period under investigation. Self-narration is a form of communication in which authors present themselves within their social context.[165] As the notion of 'self' changes over time, so do the various expressions of selfhood. In sum, scholars engaging with ego-documents will have to face the challenge of articulating their understandings of self and truth and how they fit into the specific historical context they are interested in.

2.10. Approaches to ego-documents in management and organizational history

One starting point for a more systematic engagement with ego-documents in manage- ment and organizational history is to review existing approaches and explicate their purposes and use of sources. For this article, we systematically reviewed all published articles in MOH over the last decade (176 articles from 2013—the present). In the review,

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[163] J.J. Martin, *Myth of Renaissance Individualism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).
[164] M. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of a Prison* (London: Penguin, 1991).
[165] Claudia Ulbrich, 'Person and Gender: The Memoirs of the Countess of Schwerin', *German History* 28, no. 3 (1 September 2010): 296–309, https://doi.org/10.1093/gerhis/ghq067.

we found that scholars frequently use ego-documents as we have defined them above, as sources that reveal the historical self as a thinking and feeling being in the world (agency in structure) or unveil the impact of social norms and relationships on the historical self (structure in agency). In fact, authors of MOH have used a surprising variety of ego- documents to study the historical self, including both textual and audio/visual sources (see Table 2-2).

Table 2-2: Use of ego-documents in MOH, 2013—present.

Text
- **(Auto-)Biographies/memoirs** (Booth 2013; Levant and Maziane 2017; Manning 2018; Ng and Scully 2013; Reveley and Singleton 2013; Tikkanen 2017; Vachhani 2013; Varje & Turtiainen 2017)
- **Historical writings/newspapers/archival material** (Barratt 2014; Crawford 2015; Hoffman 2021; Hollow and Vik 2016; Joseph 2019)
- **Social Media, blogs & websites** (Manning 2018; Vachhani 2013)
- **Diaries/notebooks/personal papers** (Rippin 2013; Śliwa, 2013; Tikkanen 2016, 2017)
- **Interviews** (Johanson and Kao 2015; Kuokkanen and Seeck 2013; Muhr and Salem 2013; Nätti and Lähteenmäki 2016; Proctor 2013; Śliwa, 2013)
- **Testimonies** (Hollow and Vik 2016; Kenny 2013; Vincent 2018)
- **Corporate magazines/editorials/press releases** (Kuokkanen and Seeck 2013; Ng and Scully 2013)
- **Obituaries** (Bower 2018; Myrick, Mills, and Mills 2013)
- **Correspondence/letters** (Barnes and Newton 2018; Hartt et al. 2014; Levant and Maziane 2017; Lopes 2017; Smith and Simeone 2017; Spero 2017; Tikkanen 2016)
- **Job advertisements, applications & CVs** (Kvålshaugen and Amdam 2014; Strunz 2020; Varje, Anttila, and Väänänen 2013)
- **Memos, minutes, debates** (Corrigan 2016; Georgiou 2014; Hartt et al. 2014)
- **Speeches, sermons, and lectures** (Brockhoff 2018; Charmettant 2021; Land and Taylor 2014)
- **Court records** (Manning 2018)
- **Reports, logs & formal descriptive accounts** (Kenny 2013; Le Bris 2021; Levant and Maziane 2017)

Audio & Visual
- **Video recordings** (Kokk and Jönsson 2013)
- **Photographs** (Kuronen 2015)
- **Cartoons, doodles** (McKinlay 2013)
- **Material objects** (Land and Taylor 2014)

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To further explore these prior uses, we distinguish four approaches to ego-documents in the articles we reviewed, which we call (i) remembering ego, (ii) experiencing ego, (iii) coping ego, and (iv) positioning ego. We arrived at these four by first taking inspiration from Decker, Hassard, and Rowlinson and distinguishing between ego-documents that explore historical actors' past experiences in their own time (experience) and those ego-documents dealing with historical actors' memories of the past (memory).[166] Second and inspired by our review of existing discussions of ego-documents[167], we ask if the ego-document prioritizes the acting, thinking, and feeling self in the world (*agency in structure*) or if it foregrounds how the world imparts challenges and structures on the ego, forcing the self to cope, deal, or manage (*structure in agency*). We provide examples of all four from the reviewed articles (for an overview, see, Figure 2-1 and Table 2-3).

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[166] Decker, Hassard, and Rowlinson, 'Rethinking History and Memory in Organization Studies'.
[167] Fulbrook and Rublack, 'In Relation'.

Figure 2-1: Four approaches to ego-documents in Management and Organizational History.
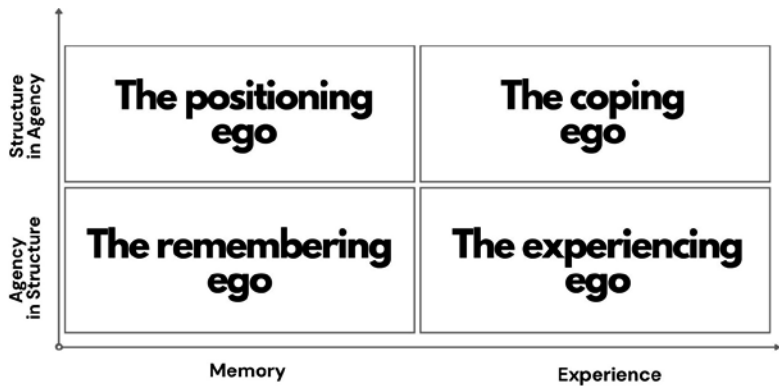
Scholars interested in the retrospective self-thematizations of actors (memory/agency in structure) look to ego-documents to explore the remembering ego. They analyze how actors look backward and make sense of their past, often to make an argument about their role or position in time that can give them an advantage in the present or future. This approach routinely includes questioning how actors structure their accounts of the past and which approach to time and periodization they take. It may also comprise the variations in how people remember over time if ego-documents are available that show actors' memory at different moments in time.

Table 2-3: Exemplars of approaches to ego-documents.

Table 3. Exemplars of Approaches to Ego-Documents.

	The Remembering Ego	The Experiencing Ego	The Positioning Ego	The Coping Ego
Focus	Memory/ Agency in Structure	Experience/Agency in Structure	Memory/Structure in Agency	Experience/Structure in Agency
Example paper	(Kuronen 2015)	(Kenny 2013)	(Vincent 2018)	(McKinlay 2013)
Types of sources	Photographs, diary entries	Witness accounts from schoolchildren	Testimony before the US Representative House's Ways and Means Committee	Bank personnel records; secret ledger of cartoons by bank clerk
Research interest (paraphrased by the authors)	How did a historical actor use his ritual pastime of fishing (memorialized in photographs) to construct his leadership methodology within his 'tribe' and in the public arena?	How did school children experience abuse in Ireland's industrial schools, and how can we reengage with their voices that had been silenced?	How did an organization, represented by its Vice-President, use the memory of its past war sacrifices to realize a strategic advantage in subsequent debates about tariff rates?	How did Victorian bank clerks cope with their employers' intrusive inspection and career system? What does their process of dealing with it reveal about power structures at the bank?
Purpose	Exploring the process of establishing a leadership mythology	Understand how organizations participate in the enactment of large-scale violence and silence victims	Understand how organizations utilize social memory assets strategically in times of crisis	Study management, work, and organization in Victorian banks to understand power and authority
Example Quotes	'I looked at how his ritual pastime of fishing [. . .] was used in constructing his leadership mythology both within the "tribe", as well as in the public arena.' (p. 53) "The men shared a private fishing ritual, simultaneously constructing the leadership mythology of the "Fishing President Kekkonen"' (p. 55)	'Traveling back and forth through the 60-year period during which industrial schools operated, and oscillating between a variety of different voices' (p. 15) 'a re-engagement with voices that otherwise remain silenced' (p. 20) 'The above montage enables something of a new perspective on these unimportant remnants of Irish society that were ignored at the time, and that history has since forgotten.' (p. 21)	'management invoked the memory of wartime service when petitioning the government for relief from imports' (p. 353) 'the possibility of a tariff too low to protect its production spurred a sensemaking connected to its own memories of wartime service' (p. 353) 'By developing an SMA tied to its service in WWII, Onondaga sought to leverage governmental assistance in times of hardship.' (p. 354)	"The ways that Victorian bank clerks accommodated, coped with or ridiculed their employers' highly prescriptive employment practices are considered through archival marginalia: specifically, a set of workday cartoons [. . .] that offered a sophisticated commentary on bank management, work and organization." (p. 137)

An example of the remembering ego is Kuronen's study of the memory of the 'Fishing President Kekkonen.'[168] President of Finland from 1956 to 1981, Kekkonen habitually engaged in the pastime of fishing and elevated the memory of this routine into a personal mythology that persists to this day. Based on an analysis of 423 photographs of fishing trips, in connection with correspondence and Kekkonen's diary entries, this author studies how the president and his disciples remembered these trips and constructed a lasting leadership myth from them. While interested in how the historical actors are purposefully memorialized, the author also carefully considers "the social behind the visual" by examining the relevant historical and cultural context of this remembering ego (agency in structure).[169] Ultimately, Kuronen's study explores the photographs and related diary entries as ego-documents to study the emergence of 'a naturalized leadership mythology' over 25 years.[170]

By contrast, scholars interested in the experiencing ego (experience/agency in structure) will approach ego-documents for the clues they give about historical actors' subjective lived experiences and to understand what is meaningful, pleasing, or hurtful to them in their own time. In line with Presser's original use of the term and with the objectives of 'everyday history'[171], scholars study the experiencing ego to diversify the perspectives on historical accounts and analyze different, even diverging understandings. Supported by detailed contextualization of ego-documents and compar- ison of different types of sources, scholars thus reconstruct experiences of the ego in situ, focusing on the subjective vantage point of one or several historical actors.

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[168] Tuomas Kuronen, 'Visual Discourse Analysis in Historical Research: A Case of Visual Archaeology?', *Management & Organizational History* 10, no. 1 (2 January 2015): 52–70, https://doi.org/10.1080/17449359.2014.989233.
[169] Kuronen, 56.
[170] Kuronen, 66–67.
[171] Brewer, 'Microhistory and the Histories of Everyday Life'; Steege et al., 'The History of Everyday Life: A Second Chapter'.

One example of such a study of the experiencing ego is Kate Kenny's historical analysis of the experience of school children at Ireland's industrial schools.[172] Using witness/survivor accounts, Kenny studies how children, usually from low-income families, experi- enced physical and mental abuse at these institutions. Her explicit goal with this research, in line with everyday history, is "a re-engagement with voices that otherwise remain silenced"[173] and to enable "something of a new perspective."[174] Complementing a set of witness accounts with letters exchanged during the time and newspaper articles, Kenny traces the children's actions and experiences over the sixty years of the schools' existence. He contrasts them to the (in)actions, knowledge, and abuse of power of the staff of Ireland's Department of Education and Irish politicians, thus showing the children's agency within a structure of systematic abuse (agency in structure).

While both the remembering and the experiencing ego prioritize the individual actor in his or her world, ego-documents are also useful for understanding how structures and social relationships shape, i.e. facilitate or constrain, the lived experiences and memories of historical actors. Scholars whose primary interest lies in understanding how actors remember such structural constraints (memory/structure in agency) will focus on ego- documents disclosing the positioning ego. They study actors' memories of the past to make sense of the actors' own perception of their place in the world and within a web of social relationships and systems of norms and values.

Such studies can be particularly insightful for seeing how the impact of identity markers, such as gender, race, and class, is remembered by historical actors. The approach may also help explore how a specific 'packaging' of the past can be leveraged to gain strategic

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[172] Kate Kenny, 'Affective Disruption: Walter Benjamin and the "History" of Ireland's Industrial Schools', *Management & Organizational History* 8, no. 1 (1 February 2013): 10–22, https://doi.org/10.1080/17449359.2013.749676.
[173] Kenny, 20.
[174] Kenny, 21.

advantages, such as the uses of the past[175]or rhetorical history[176] literature suggest. Significantly, historical actors perceive systems of discrimination or opportunity structures differently. Studies of the positioning ego explore how they are remembered as structures that meaningfully impact historical actors' agency.

For example, Stephanie Vincent's study of the management of the Onondaga Pottery company after WWII shows how the company's Vice President used the memory of Onondaga's war sacrifice to lobby politically for preferential tariff treatment.[177] Inspired by rhetorical history studies, Vincent analyzes the testimony of the company's Vice President before the United States House Committee on Ways and Means as an ego-document, exemplifying the positioning ego. Not only did the organizational actor 'package' his own memory of the past, but he actively connected it to the collective memory of his community, creating a social memory asset[178] that could be leveraged to mobilize government assistance. The study thus shows structure, in this case widely recognized societal narratives and expectations, in agency, focused on the memory work of a historical actor.

On the flip side, scholars interested in how actors experience such structural con- straints in situ (experience/structure in agency) will focus on the coping ego. This perspective sheds light on the world in relation to the self in the historical actors' own time. Studies focusing on the coping ego explore how structures and norms constrain or facilitate the self, foregrounding questions about how structure shapes agency. In the extreme, this approach may include the analysis of ego-documents

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[175] Wadhwani et al., 'History as Organizing'.

[176] Suddaby, Foster, and Quinn, 'Rhetorical History as a Source of Competitive Advantage'.

[177] Stephanie Vincent, 'Social Memory Assets as a Defense Mechanism: The Onondaga Pottery in World War II', *Management & Organizational History* 13, no. 4 (2 October 2018): 352–72, https://doi.org/10.1080/17449359.2018.1525405.

[178] William M. Foster et al., 'History as Social Memory Assets: The Example of Tim Hortons', *Management & Organizational History* 6, no. 1 (February 2011): 101–20, https://doi.org/10.1177/1744935910387027.

with an impersonal subject, such as Alain Corbin's *The Life of an Unknown,* a biography of a French clog-maker in the nineteenth century, about whom little is known but his entries in civil registries.[179] Corbin puts the few remnants of this clog maker's life into a sophisticated dialogue with other historical sources, allowing him to explore how life in the clog-maker's village differed for him from life in the forest and how the church and different French governments constrained his everyday life. Studying the positioning ego means less interest in the specific agency of the ego and more interest in how different social structures manifest in his life and experiences.[180]

McKinlay's study of human resource records of a Victorian bank and of doodles by a few bank clerks exemplifies this approach.[181] The author explores how clerks coped with their employers' intrusive inspection and career system, both by accommodating its impact on their careers and lives and by ridiculing the system in their secret workday cartoons. In his approach, McKinlay stands in the tradition of the everyday historian Alf Lüdtke and his work on stubbornness ['Eigensinn'], defined as the "spontaneous self-will, a kind of self-affirmation, an act of (re)appropriating alienated social relations on and off the shopfloor by self-assertive prankishness, demarcating a space of one's own".[182] McKinlay traces the silently subversive actions of the clerks, which helps him illuminate the structures and routines of power and authority at play. He thus explores clerks' specific and subjective historical experience over time but foregrounds how structure impacted

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[179] A. Corbin, *The Life of an Unknown: The Rediscovered World of a Clog Maker in Nineteenth-Century France* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001).

[180] On this point, see also Michael Mascuch, Rudolf Dekker, and Arianne Baggerman, 'Egodocuments and History: A Short Account of the Longue Durée', *The Historian* 78, no. 1 (1 March 2016): 27, https://doi.org/10.1111/hisn.12080.

[181] Alan McKinlay, 'Following Foucault into the Archives: Clerks, Careers and Cartoons', *Management & Organizational History* 8, no. 2 (1 May 2013): 137–54, https://doi.org/10.1080/17449359.2012.761498.

[182] Glossary in Lüdtke, *The History of Everyday Life: Reconstructing Historical Experiences and Ways of Life*, 313–14.

their agency, experiences, and self-understanding.

The four approaches are not mutually exclusive. The role of the self can change within one source or one collection of ego-documents. The boundaries between the four types are not just fluid; people engage in all four forms of self-thematization, sometimes even within one source and occasionally simultaneously. Yet, distinguishing them theoretically helps scholars ask targeted questions and explore the full range of themes that ego- documents can offer. While there may potentially be more readings of ego-documents, especially when looking at the future of this source category as we do in the final section, these four approaches are the most dominant at present in management and organizational history.

2.11. Conclusion and future research

The value of ego-documents to management and organizational history lies in the founda- tional shift in perspective that an engagement with this source group facilitates. On the level of source analysis, the category ego-documents engages with the principal tension of structure and agency and transcends narrow genre boundaries, allowing us to see inter-connected systems of sources that otherwise may be missed. On the level of source interpretation, ego-documents remind us that historians are not alone in writing, telling, drawing, or performing the past but that all human beings historicize as a way to enact their self. Engagements with how historical actors reveal themselves as thinking and feeling beings in the world and how the world's norms and structures reflect in them bring to the forefront foundational questions of how we experience and memorialize the past.

This may be more important than ever. Our current moment in time is one of rapid change in how people reveal a self. The availability of digital technologies fundamentally reconfigures how we present ourselves to the world and how the world reflects in us. These changes pose a series of challenges to the category of ego-documents but arguably

make scholarly work with such sources more critical than ever. A significant expansion of the existing discussion of ego-documents lies in the more explicit and systematic inclusion of non-written sources. While scholars have for long also used pictural and tactile sources, the debates about ego-documents have largely been confined to written self-thematization. Yet, undoubtedly, visuals (paintings, photographs) and audio-visuals (videos) are equally reveal- ing of the self than text. The significant penetration of social media in organizational and private lives may elevate questions about the differences between textual, visual, and mixed ego-documents. The impact of digitalization on actors' lived experiences will likely also raise the relevance of digital ego-documents.[183] Arguably, even the nature of self-thematization has been fundamentally transformed[184], challenging our understanding of ego-documents as sources and even the name ego-'documents', which we then may have to rethink toward other types of ego-'reflections'.

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[183] Mascuch, Dekker, and Baggerman, 'Egodocuments and History'.
[184] Popkin, 'History, Historians, and Autobiography Revisited', 695.

Chapter 3. Imagined futures of sail and steam – The role of community in envisioning entrepreneurial ventures

Morten Tinning (Forthcoming-a).

3.1. Abstract

Entrepreneurship is often understood as an individualistic endeavour. This article investigates how cultural communities shape entrepreneurial activity through the process of envisioning competing imagined futures. By deploying a microhistorical approach, it explores a public debate about the transition from sail to steam in a late nineteenth-cen- tury Danish maritime community. In the debate, local actors evaluated and negotiated future entrepreneurial actions as embedded in existing norms, interpretations of the past, and socio-technical systems rather than independent, non-conformist ventures. The article demonstrates the potential role of community when we attempt to understand better how entrepreneurs construct and dispute over imagined futures.

3.2. Introduction

In 1899, a public debate in a local newspaper caused an uproar in the Danish maritime community of Svendborg. The nineteenth century had seen the community prosper. It had become the home to numerous shipyards, a substantial local fleet of sailing vessels, and a highly skilled and experienced seafaring labour force. Against this backdrop of prosperity, parts of the community were rattled when the retired sea captain Peter Mærsk Møller called on his fellow community members to "take up the steamship-cause so that the annual profits earned at sea may in the future continue to flow to this region for the benefit of all those living here."[185]

Møller's call to action sparked a heated and contentious debate. Local shipowners and shipbuilders had competing *imagined futures*[186] for the local maritime community. Confronted with Møller's confidence in the future of steamships, they attacked the rabble-rouser for his alleged personal and professional ambitions. After a lengthy public debate, Møller's fiercest nemesis advised him to take his ideas and suggestions elsewhere "where the ground and conditions are more suited than in Svendborg."[187] Years later, the outcast Møller reflected on the debate: "Returning to Svendborg, I sought to establish a steamship company. The venture met with profound resistance and exasperation: Here, in the home of the sailing ship, everybody was against it."[188]

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[185] Peter Mærsk Møller, 'Skibsfarten fra Svendborg og Omegn: 18 February 1899', *Svendbrog Amtstidende*, 18 February 1899, No. 42 edition. All quotes are from the original sources. The translation from Danish into English is by the author. I have sought to preserve the original flavour and somewhat archaic language in the translation for accuracy and because the sources' wordings (and insults) provide a window into the historical actors' experiences. For easy reference, a transcribed version of the original texts is available and published in Jansen (1992).

[186] Beckert, *Imagined Futures*.

[187] Hans Alfred Hansen, 'Skibsfarten Fra Svendborg Og Omegn: 28. June 1899', *Svendborg Amtstidende*, 28 June 1899, No. 148 edition.

[188] Peter Mærsk Møller, 'Memoire Written by Peter Mærsk Møller Dated Svendborg 1917', 1917, 111984, Mr. M.M. Møller Secretariat., A.P. Møller-Mærsk Archive.

The debate in Svendborg was ostensibly about the future competitiveness of the local fleet of sailing vessels in a market increasingly dominated by steamships. However, a closer reading reveals a more profound confrontation between different interpretations of local conditions and worldviews in a debate that went well beyond the material transformation from sail to steam. As competing imagined futures for the community were advanced, they revealed a broader dichotomy between 'sail' and 'steam' as two distinct and different socio-technical systems supporting radically different visions of the future.

The concept of socio-technical systems originated from British mining industry field stud ies by the Tavistock Institute around 1950. The concept explores how changes in technology (*techne*)[189], procedures, and knowledge relate to cultural, social, and community aspects and the labour organisation of human beings.[190] This article frames the debate in Svendborg as a confrontation between two different socio-technical systems where the transition to steamships questioned the existing and dominant communal use of technology and how people organise knowledge and relate to one another. From this perspective, the debate in Svendborg reads as a nuanced contest between the competing imagined futures of sail and steam. The socio-technical systems concept is deployed as a well-suited framework for analysing the interrelatedness

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[189] The article follows Trish and Bamforth's original work where 'technical' refers to the ancient Greek term techne that includes knowledge and procedures and not exclusively imply material technology. E. L. Trist and K. W. Bamforth, 'Some Social and Psychological Consequences of the Longwall Method of Coal-Getting: An Examination of the Psychological Situation and Defences of a Work Group in Relation to the Social Structure and Technological Content of the Work System', *Human Relations* 4, no. 1 (1 February 1951): 3–38, https://doi.org/10.1177/001872675100400101.

[190] Trist and Bamforth; See also E. Trist, 'The Evolution of Socio-Technical-Systems - a Conceptual Framework and an Action Research Propram', vol. 2, Occasional Paper (Conference on Organizational Design and Performance, Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania: Ontario Ministry of Labour, Ontario Quality of Working Life Centre, 1981), 67, http://sistemas-humano-computacionais.wdfiles.com/local--files/capitulo%3Aredes-socio-tecnicas/Evolution_of_socio_technical_systems.pdf.

and mutual shaping of technology and social aspects of a community or organisation as a whole.

Crucially, the imagined futures inherently included moral, cultural, and social community components in their estimations of future prosperity and peril. Furthermore, when communities imagine futures through public discourse, questions also arise around temporal horizons in projecting the future and sensible considerations about existing socio-technical systems and institutions.

This article explores the mechanisms by which social communities imagine novel futures and thereby impact processes of transformation and entrepreneurship. It builds on *imagined futures* as crucial motivators for stakeholders to support uncertain entrepreneurial ventures. While most studies of entrepreneurial visions of the future focus on individual entrepreneurs' thought processes and narratives, this study shifts the attention to the role of community – with its social relationships, conventions, and deeply seated norms. Based on the historical case from Svendborg, it argues that persuasive imagined futures are both relational and socially negotiated.

Other studies by researchers in family business studies and organisation theory have argued that social groups imagine futures through dialogue, consensus, and friction.[191] Suddaby et al. argue that entrepreneurs build convincing imagined futures on a coherent narrative of the past. Entrepreneurs can convince stakeholders only if they manage to present visions that evoke broader socially accepted

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[191] Francesco Barbera, Isabell Stamm, and Rocki-Lee DeWitt, 'The Development of an Entrepreneurial Legacy: Exploring the Role of Anticipated Futures in Transgenerational Entrepreneurship', *Family Business Review* 31, no. 3 (September 2018): 352–78, https://doi.org/10.1177/0894486518780795; Diego Coraiola, Roy Suddaby, and William M. Foster, 'Organizational Fields as Mnemonic Communities', in *Knowledge and Institutions*, ed. Johannes Glückler, Roy Suddaby, and Regina Lenz, vol. 13, Knowledge and Space (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2018), 45–68, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-75328-7_3; Roy Suddaby et al., 'Entrepreneurial Visions as Rhetorical History: A Diegetic Narrative Model of Stakeholder Enrollment', *Academy of Management Review*, 17 June 2021, amr.2020.0010, https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2020.0010.

narratives.[192] Similarly, Diego Coraiola et al. show that within mnemonic communities, imagined futures are created through "a collective act of remembering that binds actors together in a common fate" by means of "the practices and categories actors use to remember the past, make sense of the present, and imagine the future."[193] Collectively, these management scholars indicate that as entrepreneurs envision the future, they are influenced by the perceptions and narratives of others and find a persuasive past to motivate engagement with an imagined future. Contributing to this line of research, Barbera et al. show how successive generations of a family business imagine their futures distinctly different and how disparate interpretations of the past within one social group can lead to divergent imagined futures.[194]

       In line with this scholarship, this article draws attention to the differences between simultaneously occurring imagined futures in the past because they reveal distinct but equally sensible readings of future entrepreneurial opportunities. Thus, they counter hindsight bias and follow a 'constitutive' historical approach, focussing on how entrepreneurs understand their own place and time.[195] As a historical case study, the debate in the maritime community of Svendborg allows for an investigation of the process of imagining futures not as an individualistic venture but as embedded in a mnemonic community. Beyond exploring how stakeholders *converge* on an imagined future, this article highlights how stakeholders can also consciously disagree with rival interpretations of the past, present, and future. Competing narratives and dialogues within entrepreneurial communities thus become an essential but so far under-appreciated context for

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[192] Suddaby et al., 'Entrepreneurial Visions as Rhetorical History'.
[193] Coraiola, Suddaby, and Foster, 'Organizational Fields as Mnemonic Communities', 46.
[194] Barbera, Stamm, and DeWitt, 'The Development of an Entrepreneurial Legacy'.
[195] R. Daniel Wadhwani and Geoffrey Jones, 'Schumpeter's Plea: Historical Reasoning in Entrepreneurship Theory and Research', in *Organizations in Time: History, Theory, Methods*, ed. Marcelo Bucheli and R. Daniel Wadhwani (Oxford University Press, 2013), 0, https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199646890.003.0008.

understanding how entrepreneurs conceive imagined futures.

3.3. Research approach and literature review

Historians have long stressed the relevance of context[196], and entrepreneurial research has recently been criticised for neglecting the broader temporal, spatial, cultural, socio-economic, and institutional backdrops in which entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial activity occur.[197]

In recent years, however, scholars have made significant progress in thinking through highly embedded uses-of-the-past[198], as well as the need to study entrepreneurship with a greater sensibility to context[199] to understand how entrepreneurship relates to a specific temporal, social and spatial setting that requires a historical perspective

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[196] Arthur Harrison Cole, *Business Enterprise in Its Social Setting* (Harvard University Press, 1959).
[197] Geoffrey Jones and R. Daniel Wadhwani, *Entrepreneurship* (Oxford University Press, 2008), https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199263684.003.0021; Wadhwani et al., 'Context, Time, and Change'.
[198] Lubinski, 'From "History as Told" to "History as Experienced"'; Andrew Smith and Daniel Simeone, 'Learning to Use the Past: The Development of a Rhetorical History Strategy by the London Headquarters of the Hudson's Bay Company', *Management & Organizational History* 12, no. 4 (2 October 2017): 334–56, https://doi.org/10.1080/17449359.2017.1394199; Wadhwani et al., 'Context, Time, and Change'.
[199] William B. Gartner, *Entrepreneurial Narrative and a Science of the Imagination: Selected Papers of William B. Gartner*, *Entrepreneurship as Organizing* (Edward Elgar Publishing, 2016), https://www.elgaronline.com/view/9781783471140.00023.xml; Colin Mason and Charles Harvey, 'Entrepreneurship: Contexts, Opportunities and Processes', *Business History* 55, no. 1 (January 2013): 1–8, https://doi.org/10.1080/00076791.2012.687542; R. Daniel Wadhwani and Christina Lubinski, 'Reinventing Entrepreneurial History', *Business History Review* 91, no. 4 (2017): 767–99, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007680517001374; Friederike Welter, 'Contextualizing Entrepreneurship—Conceptual Challenges and Ways Forward', *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice* 35, no. 1 (1 January 2011): 165–84, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6520.2010.00427.x; Friederike Welter and William B Gartner, 'Advancing Our Research Agenda for Entrepreneurship and Contexts', Elgar Research Agendas (Edward Elgar Publishing, 2016), https://doi.org/10.4337/9781784716844.00017.

and sensibility.[200] Nevertheless, neither of these streams of research has paid any systematic attention to the many ways communities can potentially shape how entrepreneurs imagine futures.

The concept of *community* is inherently complex, and with every added criterion comes limitations. However, as the aim of this article is to highlight the importance of social community in the process of envisioning entrepreneurial ventures, it deploys a broad definition of community given as "people living in one particular area or people who are considered as a unit because of their shared interests, social group, or nationality."[201] This definition considers both the geographical, cultural, and social unity of the maritime community in Svendborg while at the same time allowing room for the community as a social construct by the people who perceive themselves as part of that particular group.[202]

In its exploration of how communities imagine futures, this article follows Beckert's argument that "imagined futures – are an impetus for innovative activity" and that "competition in capitalist economies is in no small measure a struggle over imaginaries of future technologies."[203] Here, we draw specific attention to the socio-technical linkages of long-established entrepreneurial communities and their deeply ingrained cultures as one area that has been hitherto insufficiently explored. It follows that we need to understand better how communities use narratives in a socially embedded way and how the deeply ingrained and often taken-for-granted norms shape processes of entrepreneurial

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[200] Ted Baker and Friederike Welter, 'Contextual Entrepreneurship: An Interdisciplinary Perspective', *Foundations and Trends® in Entrepreneurship* 14, no. 4 (2018): 357–426, https://doi.org/10.1561/0300000078; R. Daniel Wadhwani, 'Historical Methods for Contextualizing Entrepreneurship Research', in *A Research Agenda for Entrepreneurship and Context*, by Friederike Welter and William Gartner (Edward Elgar Publishing, 2016), 134–45, https://doi.org/10.4337/9781784716844.00015; Welter, 'Contextualizing Entrepreneurship—Conceptual Challenges and Ways Forward'.
[201] Cambridge University Press, 'Community', in *Cambridge Dictionary* (Cambridge University Press, n.d.), https://www.lexico.com/definition/community.
[202] Benedict Richard O'Gorman Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, First (Verso, 1983), 6.
[203] Beckert, *Imagined Futures*, 169–70.

transformation.

This study uses a microhistorical approach[204] to investigate the narratives of the debate as seen from an unfolding present of historical actors.[205] The aim is to show how entrepreneurs make sense of and ascribe meaning to transformative processes and the communal context in which they operate.[206] The nature of the source material allows for contextualisation from the perspective of the historical actors on both sides of the fence; the contextualised arguments for concrete and specific entrepreneurial actions vis-à-vis the equally sensible arguments against them.

Historiographically, the narrative approach adds nuance to the dominating historical depiction of the debate in Svendborg. In many respects, that narrative seems shaped by hindsight and informed by the historical vindication of P.M. Møller's imagined future of (inevitable) progress for steamships and the fact that Møller eventually managed to establish a successful steamship company in Svendborg in 1904. A company that prospered and grew into the present-day global shipping giant *Mærsk (A.P. Møller – Mærsk A/S)* and whose unquestionable success has come to support a historical narrative of P.M. Møller, his son, A.P. Møller, and his grandson Mærsk Mc-Kinney Møller, as heroic entrepreneurs and purveyors of 'creative destruction'.[207] Consequently, historians have come to portray the Svendborg community as a backwards-looking, conservative community that was adverse to

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[204] Decker, 'Mothership Reconnection'.
[205] Andrew Popp and Robin Holt, 'The Presence of Entrepreneurial Opportunity', *Business History* 55, no. 1 (January 2013): 9–28, https://doi.org/10.1080/00076791.2012.687539.
[206] Hansen, 'Business History: A Cultural and Narrative Approach'.
[207] Schumpeter, 'The Creative Response in Economic History'; For examples of this historical narrative, see Hornby, *Ved rettidig Omhu...*; Jan Cortzen, *Myten Møller* (Copenhagen: Børsens Forlag, 2003), https://tales.dk/myten-moeller_jan-cortzen_9788775539864; Erik Møller Nielsen, *Svendborg Søfarts Historie siden 1253* (Svendborg: Svendborg & Omegns Museum, 2003).

change, transformation, and new technology.[208] Little, however, has been done to reconstruct the reasoning and rationale of the community arguments in their own time or ask how they related to entrepreneurial transformation and the process of imagining novel futures.

3.4. The Svendborg community and the seeds for rival imagined futures

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the Danish merchant fleet grew more numerous and extensive than ever before in its history. However, the wooden sailing vessel still dominated despite the importance of innovations in steamships. Only by 1897, two years before the debate in Svendborg, did the collective tonnage of Danish merchant steamships surpass that of sailing vessels.[209]

In Svendborg and other maritime communities in the South Funen Archipelago, the late nineteenth century represented a golden age for the collective maritime industry, including shipbuilding and seafaring. It was, however, not a sudden or accelerated success. It rested on conducive geographical conditions, a plentiful supply of wood for shipbuilding, and an established seafaring tradition, which allowed entrepreneurial shipbuilders in the first half of the century to expand their business and become shipowners in close partnerships with family, relatives, and friends.[210]

By the mid-eighteenth century, these traditional part-owned

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[208] Hornby, *Ved rettidig Omhu...*; Henrik M. Jansen, 'Skibsfarten Fra Svendborg Og Omegn - En Læserbrevsfejde Fra 1899', *Årbog for Svendborg & Omegns Museum* 13 (1992): 73–101; Møller, Detlefsen, and Johansen, *Sejl og damp, 1870-1920*; See also Ole Lange, *Stormogulen C.F. Tietgen - en finansmand, hans imperium og hans tid 1829-1901.* (København: Gyldendal, 2006), 169.

[209] Hornby and Nilsson, 'The Transition from Sail to Steam in the Danish Merchant Fleet, 1865-1910'; Hans Chr Johansen, *Dansk Økonomisk Statistik 1814-1980.*, vol. 9, Danmarks Historie (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1985), 227–29.

[210] Møller, *Jagt og Skonnert - Studier i den danske provinssøfart i tiden fra 1814 til 1864*, 41–47.

ships slowly evolved into broader cooperative ventures deeply ingrained within the local community. They thus formed an essential part of the local socio-technical system of the sailing vessel.[211] This organisation of shared ownership within the community expanded the local availability of capital for investments, allowing the community to grow and prosper. As a result, the number of sailing vessels registered in Svendborg more than doubled (from 120 to 279) between 1843 and 1883.[212]

In contrast to developments in Svendborg, Copenhagen's earlier dominating maritime community stagnated in the early half of the nineteenth century. Despite remaining the numerically largest maritime centre in Denmark, the Copenhagen maritime industry only recovered when it specialised and concentrated its maritime investments in steamships in the 1860s. Consequently, a division of labour and interest emerged between Copenhagen and provincial maritime centres like Svendborg. While ownership and management of steamships and liner freight were concentrated in Copenhagen, sailing ships engaged in tramp freight mostly hailed from smaller maritime communities in provincial ports.[213] In 1866 the merger of several smaller steamship companies into the united Steamship Company (DFDS) in Copenhagen further consolidated this trend, and by 1870 seventy-five percent of Danish steamship tonnage was controlled from Copenhagen.[214] Furthermore, whereas the socio-technical system of sail was highly embedded within the local social and cultural structures of maritime communities like Svendborg, the steamship companies of Copenhagen were large public stock companies backed by financiers and bankers and run by boards and

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[211] Møller Nielsen, *Svendborg Søfarts Historie siden 1253*, 86–87; See also Palle O. Christiansen, *Med skibet i kroppen: Mennesker og maritimt miljø i Det sydfynske Øhav 1750-1950* (Marstal: Marstal Søfartsmuseum, 2020), 173–78.
[212] Holm-Petersen, *Træk Af Skibsfartens Udvikling i Svendborg Toldsted*, 26–27.
[213] Møller, Detlefsen, and Johansen, *Sejl og damp, 1870-1920*, 5:7–42.
[214] Møller, Detlefsen, and Johansen, 5:226–31.

managers.[215]

3.5. Introducing the debate

The historical debate in Svendborg consists of nineteen letters to the editor published in the local newspaper *Svendborg Amtstidende*. The newspaper had a circulation of approximately one thousand copies daily except on Sundays and holidays in a town of some eleven thousand people. Politically, the newspaper aligned itself with the political party *Højre*, which primarily represented the wealthy landowners and landed gentry in Denmark.[216]

As shown in Figure 3-1, a total of six people took part in the debate. The core of the dispute, however, is found in the heated exchanges between Peter Mærsk Møller (1836–1927), Jørgen Ring-Andersen (1842–1901), H.A. Hansen (1844–1922), and J.P. Hansen (1843–1918). The contributions from H. Rasmussen (n.d.) and F.W. Valentin (1826–1912) amounted to minor incursions and comments.

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[215] Poul Graae, *Hundrede år på havene - Det Forenede Dampskibs-Selskab 1866-1966* (Copenhagen: DFDS, 1966), 35–55.
[216] Jansen, 'Skibsfarten Fra Svendborg Og Omegn - En Læserbrevsfejde Fra 1899'.

Figure 3-1: Participants and progress of the debate, 18. February - 28. June 1899.
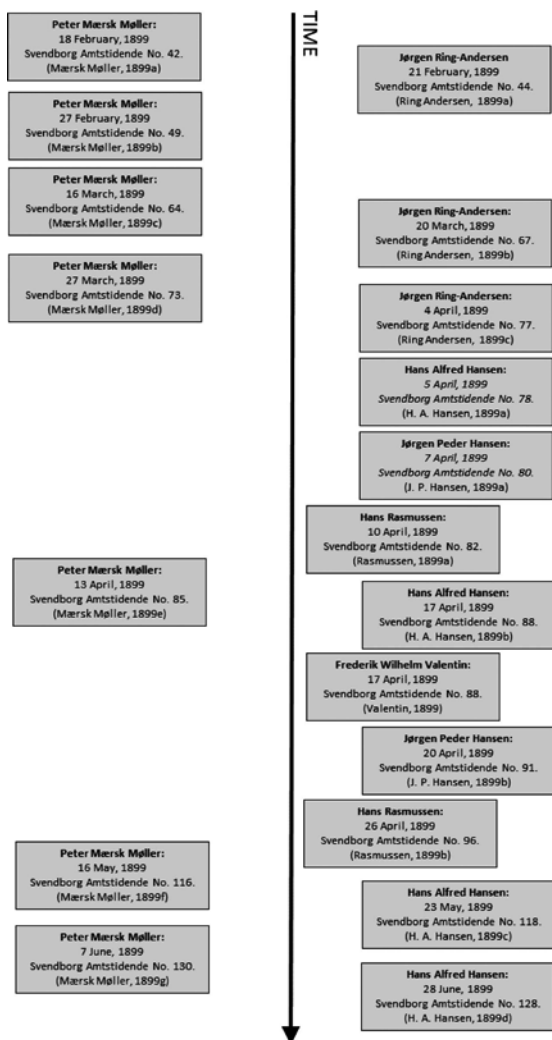
Of the four main protagonists, Peter Mærsk Møller was the only non-native to Svendborg. Born and raised on the North Sea Island of Rømø, he followed local tradition and went to sea as a mess boy on his father's ship at age fourteen. After earning a sea captain certificate in 1861, family connections secured his command of a vessel belonging to a wealthy shipowner from Dragør outside Copenhagen. In 1864, he married the shipowner's eldest daughter and spent nineteen years as a captain of ships belonging to his father-in-law. After being shipwrecked off the Scottish coast in December 1883, he returned home only to learn that his father-in-law had drowned in a boating accident and that his mother-in-law intended to part with the family shipping business. These events prompted Møller to acquire a certificate as a steamship captain in 1884 and move the family to Svendborg.

After gaining experience in English steamers, Møller decided to invest in a steamship, raising additional capital, not locally, but from connections in Newcastle and Copenhagen. In 1886 a small steamer was purchased, with Møller putting up 12,000 DKK/Danish Krones of the total starting capital of 20,000 DKK. Operating from Svendborg, Møller proceeded to sail the Baltic and the North Sea trades for the next 12 years. In 1898 he surrendered the captaincy to his eldest son and retired to the family home in Svendborg.[217] Contrary to Møller, the three other prime antagonists, Jørgen Ring-Andersen, H.A. Hansen, and J.P. Hansen, were all native to the Svendborg area. Like Møller, they had all gone to sea at age fourteen, with the two Hansens eventually rising to the rank of captain.

The exception was Ring-Andersen, who decided to become a ship carpenter. After an apprenticeship in Aabenraa, he returned home in 1861, where he followed the local tradition of earlier shipbuilders and built two small schooners with his mother and other

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[217] Hornby, *Ved rettidig Omhu...*, 16–25.

family members as the principal part-owners. In 1864, he gained experience building tea clippers at Alexander Hall's shipyard in Aberdeen. After spending a few years working as a foreman and master shipbuilder in Danish shipyards, he decided to go back and set up a shipyard in Svendborg. By his death in 1901, his shipyard had built eighty-four wooden sailing ships, averaging almost two and a half vessels a year.[218]

As mentioned, both Hansens followed a traditional seafaring life trajectory within the local community – progressing from mess boys to sea captains on local ships. As a captain, H.J. Hansen would stay at sea while H.A. Hansen eventually settled as a successful local corresponding shipper and shipowner. By 1893 he was the corresponding shipowner of six local two-masted schooners, and by 1907 continual success had made him one of the largest shipowners in Svendborg, managing a fleet of twenty sailing vessels.[219]

3.6. Why a public debate?

Before moving on, it is worth considering why Møller decided on a public appeal. Could he not have raised the issue in a local maritime association or through private and informal discussions with local shipbuilders, shipowners, and sea captains? Møller's own correspondence is silent on the matter, and so is Møller's primary biographer.[220] We can, however, try to deduce an answer from exploring Møller's position within the community. Overall, Møller initiates or continually revives the discussion, while his counterpart often states that the whole business is somewhat of a nuisance to

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[218] Kaj Nykjær Jensen, *Ring Andersens værft - fire generationer på Frederiksøen* (J. Ring Andersens Skibsværft v. Peter Ring-Andersen, 2017), 26–27.

[219] Holm-Petersen, *Skibe og Søfolk fra Svendborgsund*, 27–33.

[220] Peter Mærsk Møller, 'Correspondance from Peter Mærsk Møller, 1853-1927.', Correspondance, Mr M.M. Møller Secretariat, Family papers, correspondance and memoires from Peter Mærsk Møller, 1853-1927. Box 111984, A.P Møller-Mærsk Company Archive; Hornby, *Ved rettidig Omhu...*

them. As H.A. Hansen remarked in one response: "The intention of Mr P.M. Møller's articles … can hardly be mistaken, and although I have better things to do other than to write newspaper articles, the presentation does, however, allow me the opportunity to deliver a response, accompanied by some potentially enlightening information."[221]

As a non-native to Svendborg, who had spent most of his life at sea, we can view Møller as a potential outsider. As Møller eventually retired to Svendborg in 1898, he gained the characteristics of what George Simmel defines as the stranger; one "who comes today and stays tomorrow" and who has the potential to import qualities into the community "which do not and cannot stem from the group itself."[222]

Evidence from Møller's private correspondence shows that he was well connected outside Svendborg, and during the debate, he makes frequent references to developments in non-Danish maritime communities. One example is in his letter of the 27th of February. He writes: "If one had started years ago, as was done in Gothenburg, there could probably have been an Iron Shipyard here."[223] In contrast, Ring-Andersen's response is revealing: "How it transpired in Gothenburg, I know not …, and neighbouring countries are legislatively far more favoured when it comes to shipping than Denmark. Therefore, I will stick to our domestic conditions."[224]

Another aspect that set Møller apart from the community was his experience with steamships. Unlike most Svendborg ships,

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[221] Hans Alfred Hansen, 'Skibsfarten Fra Svendborg Og Omegn: 5. April 1899', *Svendborg Amtstidende*, 5 April 1899, No. 78 edition.

[222] George Simmel, 'The Stranger', in *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*, trans. Kurt Wolff (New York: Free Press, 1908), 402, https://www.infoamerica.org/documentos_pdf/simmel01.pdf.

[223] Peter Mærsk Møller, 'Skibsfarten Fra Svendborg Og Omegn: 27. February 1899', *Svendborg Amtstidende*, 27 February 1899, No. 49 edition.

[224] J. Ring Andersen, 'Skibsfarten Fra Svendborg Og Omegn: 20. March 1899', *Svendborg Amtstidende*, 20 March 1899, No. 67 edition.

Møller's small steamer was neither built nor bought locally, and apart from Møller, it had no local investors.[225] (Hornby, 1988, p. 23). In addition, several invoices from the ship's ledger suggest that the steamer was never refitted or repaired in Svendborg.[226] Although registered and operated from Svendborg, Møller's steamship was not a fully integrated part of the socio-technical system of the Svendborg community. Evidence also suggests that Møller's financial network rested outside Svendborg's maritime community. As mentioned earlier, the purchase of a steamship in 1886 received financial support from personal connections in Newcastle and Copenhagen. Indeed, Møller never managed to attract investments from the maritime community in Svendborg. However, he successfully attracted investments from the Svendborg financial and industrial community.[227] Consequently, Møller's position as a steamship stranger in "the home of the sailing ship"[228] – one who is inside yet outside – seems a plausible explanation for his choice of an open public appeal rather than an informal debate within the local maritime community.

3.7. Competing imagined futures

Møller's initial appeal on the 18th of February began by recognising the maritime community's progress and prosperity before observing the macro trend towards steamships. Pointing to the advantages of steam as well as new communication technologies, like the telegraph and the telephone, he argued that "steam is progress, and no one can stop its impetus. Therefore, as experience shows, steamships are

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[225] Hornby, *Ved rettidig Omhu...*, 23.
[226] N N, 'S/S Laura, Assorted Papers', 1889 1886, Box 283984, A.P Moller - Maersk Company Archive.
[227] Hornby, *Ved rettidig Omhu...*, 33–39.
[228] Mærsk Møller, 'Memoire Written by Peter Mærsk Møller Dated Svendborg 1917'.

increasingly displacing the sailing ships."[229] Explicating his reasoning further, he pointed out that it "is not that the steamships provide cheaper freight than the sailing ships, but that the steamships are faster and less uncertain than sailing vessels; that the goods are brought at a somewhat predictable time and are less prone to damage in the ship's hold while at sea."[230]

In Møller's view, the maritime community in Svendborg had failed to react timely to this decisive development: 'Although many shipowners and masters here observe the displacement of the sailing vessels from one port after another, the building of sailing ships has continued'. Møller then restated his conviction "that the transport of goods across the ocean by sailing ship will be an outdated mode of transportation can hardly be denied by anyone who has an eye for developments in the world. Consequently, the sailing ships will sooner or later lose their significant value."[231]

The issue was complex. Nevertheless, Møller's message was both unambiguous and provocative. It was time for entrepreneurial action! To Møller, the community had no choice but to engage in the technological transformation from sail to steam: The most urgent issue of nineteenth-century shipping and one of the most transformative innovations of the Second Industrial Revolution.[232] In Møller's imagined future, the transition from sail to steam was present, ongoing, and inevitable. He accentuated the urgency of the

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[229] Mærsk Møller, 'Skibsfarten Fra Svendborg Og Omegn: 27. February 1899'.
[230] Mærsk Møller.
[231] Mærsk Møller.
[232] Femme S. Gaastra, 'From Crisis to Prosperity: Dutch Shipping 1860-1913', in *Crisis and Transition - Maritime Sectors in the North Sea Region 1790-1940*, Deutsche Maritime Studien 5 (Bremerhaven: Verlag H.M. Hauschild GmbH & Deutschen Schiffahrtsmuseum, 2008), 240; David M. Williams and John Armstrong, 'An Appraisal of the Progress of the Steamship in the Nineteenth Century', in *The World's Key Industry - History and Economics of International Shipping*, ed. Gelina Harlaftis, Stig Tenold, and Jesús M. Valdaliso (Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 43–62; For a Danish context, see Hornby and Nilsson, 'The Transition from Sail to Steam in the Danish Merchant Fleet, 1865-1910'; Møller, Detlefsen, and Johansen, *Sejl og damp, 1870-1920*.

matter by drawing on the past, stating that his objective was not "to criticise what one has done, or what one should perhaps have done." However, "no one seems to look ahead or take into account the future of shipping."[233]

To Møller, the emerging dominance of steamships posed a severe threat to the local maritime community since its heavy reliance on the existing socio-technological system of the sailing vessels made it vulnerable and potentially unsustainable. It was against that specific future that shipowners and shipbuilders within the community felt obliged to object. As we shall see, the evidence from the debate shows that both sides shared a common understanding that the issue of sail versus steam went well beyond a transformation of material technology. Thus, the debate reveals an acute awareness of the local socio-technical system of traditional sailing vessels as composed of intimate connections between the social community, established forms of organising, and deep-rooted local knowledge about sailing ships' material technology and operations.

3.8. Temporal horizons of profitability

The past, present, and future profitability of sailing vessels vs steamships featured promi- nently in the debate, with several protagonists referring to past and present yields from selected local ships.[234] Unfortunately for historians, accurate accounts from individual sailing vessels are rare, and comparing the quoted economic figures with other historical sources is challenging. However, fictional expectations are not just "fantasies devoid of

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[233] Mærsk Møller, 'Skibsfarten Fra Svendborg Og Omegn: 27. February 1899'.
[234] Hansen, 'Skibsfarten Fra Svendborg Og Omegn: 5. April 1899'; J.P. Hansen, 'Skibsfarten Fra Svendborg Og Omegn: 7. April 1899', *Svendborg Amtstidende*, 7 April 1899, No. 80 edition; Mærsk Møller, 'Skibsfarten Fra Svendborg Og Omegn: 27. February 1899'; H. Rasmussen, 'Skibsfarten Fra Svendborg Og Omegn: 10. April 1899', *Svendborg Amtstidende*, 10 April 1899, No. 82 edition.

reality" but created from known facts, where the "intermingling of fact and the imaginary adds credibility to depictions of future states of the world."[235] Therefore, the context in which the numerical facts are presented (rather than the actual numbers) offers an equally fascinating entry into analysing the competing imagined futures.

The temporal horizons of projected profits are of particular interest here. On one side, we find Møller's inevitable long-term demise of the sailing ship and his stated view that steamships were equally, if not more, profitable than sailing vessels.[236] Countering the argument, Møller's antagonists objected with numbers of (factual) past and present profitability of local sailing vessels, presented from a much shorter time frame. The argument was that for some time in the future, an equilibrium would exist in the market (or at least a profitable niche for sailing ships) that the local community seemed well-positioned to take advantage of while at the same time preserving the socio-technical system of the local maritime community. Condensing the opposing arguments for past, present, and future profitability resulted in two contrasting strategies (see Table 3-1). First, we have Møller's call for imperative long-term investments in (uncertain) steam ventures. Opposing that, we have the community's continual engagement and investment in sailing vessels, a presently profitable strategy that would expectedly remain so for the foreseeable future.

3.9. Svendborg and Copenhagen: a shared narrative of them and us

As both sides of the debate tried to make sense of the competing imagined futures, it relied on a constructed narrative distinction

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[235] Beckert, *Imagined Futures*, 68.
[236] Mærsk Møller, 'Skibsfarten Fra Svendborg Og Omegn: 27. February 1899'.

between Svendborg, the "home of the sailing vessel",[237] and Copenhagen, the home of large steamship companies.

Table 3-1: Summary of imagined futures of profitability and risk management

P.M. Møller	Steamships represent progress that no one will be able to stop. The transport of goods by sailing ship will eventually disappear, and the vessels will lose their value.
J. Ring-Andersen	Steamships are more profitable now than before, but this development is probably close to its climax. If the growth in steamships continues, coal prices will surely rise in proportion to that growth. The training of skilled sailors can take place in sailing vessels, so these will not be entirely displaced. The skills needed to build steamships will be necessary for the future, but the situation is not yet hopeless for sailing vessels.
H.A. Hansen	Wooden sailing vessels will continue to compete with steamships in the foreseeable future, and the steamships will not entirely displace the sailing ship. The present situation reflects competition, and there is enough room in the market for both types of ships. The sailing vessels have higher yields than steamers in low freight rates. A transition from sail to steam will, for the time being, mean an economic decline in these provincial towns.
H.J. Hansen	Things are going well. Everyone gets something, so why make a change? The sailing ships will remain in demand. The central argument for continuing with the sailing vessels is their profitability, which has been most satisfying until now (I wonder if steamers yield more?)
H. Rasmussen	The increasing number of steamships weakens the position of the sailing ships, but one should not completely give up hope of a modest existence for sailing vessels.
F.W. Valentin	Nothing prevents steamships and sailing vessels from existing side by side. Why stop the building of sailing ships, as long as there is no advantage in steamships? If an advantage for steamships is to come, then the owners of sailing vessels are not the right people to set a steamship business in motion. As long as the sailing vessels produce higher yields than steamers, many owners of sailing vessels will probably not accept the uncertainty of steamers.

In Møller's view, "Copenhagen has had an unfortunate influence on the entrepreneurial activity and initiatives involving steamships in the provincial towns." Whenever a provincial initiative had successfully established a steamship service, "Copenhagen sought to acquire it

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[237] Mærsk Møller, 'Memoire Written by Peter Mærsk Møller Dated Svendborg 1917'.

through *cunning* or *coercion*." Consequently, "Copenhagen has a large steamship fleet, and it reaps the benefits while the provincial towns are left behind."[238] In this trope, the city of Copenhagen represents a concrete, greedy, and power-hungry community that deploys dishonest business methods to exclude the provincial periphery from steam shipping. The narrative dichotomy is between Copenhagen's political, industrial, and financial gravity and a provincial periphery struggling to innovate and improve local conditions.

Although members of the community such as H.A. Hansen and J.P. Hansen most likely agreed with Møller's moral apprehension against the 'cunning' and 'coercion' displayed by Copenhagen businessmen, the fundamental dichotomy, in their view, was not between Copenhagen and the provincial town of Svendborg. To them, Copenhagen was a symbolic representation of the socio-technical system of the steamship. It was a system organised around the industrial joint-stock company for the sole benefit of large shareholders, bank- ers, egocentric directors, well-paid captains, and greedy shipbrokers. Deploying his trademark sarcastic and arrogant style, H.A. Hansen let loose by imagining the devastating effects a change of the socio-technical system would have on the local community:

> *At least the steamships will provide lucrative positions for directors, captains, and not least for shipbrokers, who will come to close deals on large steamers instead of trading small sailing vessels. At the same time, the shipbuilders could shift their attention to the construction of unprofitable iron shipyards or seek other positions, while the carpenters and craftsmen could quickly train as blacksmiths – all in all, a rather beautiful prospect for the future.*[239]

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[238] Mærsk Møller, 'Skibsfarten fra Svendborg og Omegn: 18 February 1899'.
[239] Hansen, 'Skibsfarten Fra Svendborg Og Omegn: 28. June 1899'.

Criticising Møller, community members further highlighted the interdependency of the local socio-technical systems. In his letter of the 5 April, H.A. Hansen explains the ripple effects of a transition from sail to steam:

> *... there is another, quite significant aspect to the case [the demise of sail], which we cannot leave out of consideration. Namely, the local industry. Without taking into account the master shipbuilders' profit, which employs so many workers, artisans, professionals, merchants, etc., that 25% of the building costs are earned by these even before the ships go to sea. Just as we might consider the profits that flow into the local community from the same vessels, profits that have provided and will continue to provide many a good sailor with a decent position in life under the given circumstances.*[240]

Here Hansen points to the relationship between investments in new ships and their socio-economic consequences for the entire community. We see the distribution of money explicated as it trickles down from the entrepreneurial investor to the shipbuilder and from there to the craftsmen and artisans. The professionals, merchants, and seafarers would operationalise the ship when launched. If properly managed, all or parts of the profits would re-enter the community and eventually recirculate by building a new vessel. It is "from the same vessels"[241] that prosperity comes in the past, present, and future. Møller's reply on the 13 April engages indirectly with the socio-technical systems described by Hansen:

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[240] Hansen, 'Skibsfarten Fra Svendborg Og Omegn: 5. April 1899'.
[241] Hansen.

I do realise that the transition from sail to steam gives cause for considerable difficulty in this region as it interferes with the very foundation on which its flourishing shipping originates. Namely, when a young man has saved a little money, and the parents wish to help a little, family and friends also help the young man procure a ship to commend. Moreover, this handsome aid, kindness, and interest in each other have evolved into what it is now beautiful sailing vessels ... The young man has gone to sea free and happy and done everything within his power so that the outcome of his voyages might prove profitable for the partners ... The Steamships, on the other hand, are somewhat more like a factory. More must unite, as considerable sums of money are required, and the day-to-day operation must, to be profitable, be like a factory; Although this relates to what came before, it is, however, different. Therein lies part of the reason why not all beginnings in steamships agree with what one thought or expected.[242]

The future is not like the past. The traditional cooperative culture will not be sustainable in a future dominated by steamships. The community's "aid, kindness, and interest" cannot procure or operate a steamship. The "flourishing" past will disappear with the steam- ships, and a very different future, requiring "considerable sums of money", must "be like a factory" to be profitable. It is a less romantic, much less culturally and socially interdependent (and perhaps desirable) future that Møller offers the community. It will give "cause for considerable difficulty."[243]

[242] Peter Mærsk Møller, 'Skibsfarten Fra Svendborg Og Omegn13. April 1899', *Svendborg Amtstidende*, 13 April 1899, No. 85 edition.
[243] Mærsk Møller.

From then on, the debate became a direct conflict between the two opposing socio-technical systems and the competing imagined futures they implied. The survival and prosperity of the cooperative community were now at stake. A fundamental question became how the community would approach risk management of what was, in a sense, a collective resource.

3.10. Risk management in a community context

Steamships required a significantly higher investment of capital and resources in one venture than a sailing vessel, reducing the ability to diversify risks.[244] In the words of J.P. Hansen,

"No one can guarantee that these steamers will not eat themselves up. Then, it will most likely not be so easy getting the industry in motion again as it is now, and on which so many livelihoods depend."[245]

Risk management had long been a crucial issue for the Svendborg maritime community. Perhaps not surprisingly, issues relating to the local marine insurance association, Svendborg Søassurance, were a second recurring theme in the debate.

In marine insurance, an insurer (underwriter) assumes partial or full responsibility for risks to a vessel, a cargo, or both, in exchange for an insurance premium. A contract often covered a particular voyage or a fixed amount of time and included various risks at sea or in port. Marine insurance was crucial for expanding maritime trade in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries by limiting the risk of a potentially catastrophic loss of high-value assets.

By the 1850s, marine insurance had developed in divergent ways in different countries. In Britain, the market was dominated by a marketplace for private insurers facilitated by Lloyd's of London, while joint-stock insurance corporations dominated the market in the United

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[244] Williams, 'Introduction: The World of Shipping', x.
[245] Hansen, 'Skibsfarten Fra Svendborg Og Omegn: 7. April 1899'.

States.[246] The Danish King granted a monopoly to The Royal Marine-Insurance Company (Det Kongelig Oktroierede Sø-Assurance Kompagni) in 1726. Before that, insurers from the Dutch Provinces and Hamburg dominated the market. However, since *individuals* were not explicitly forbidden to insure themselves against damages at sea[247], many regional seafaring communities could circumvent the monopoly and uphold traditional ties to foreign insurers.[248] By the 1780s and decidedly from the 1820s and 1830s onwards, unfavourable exchange rates and high premiums led to local initiatives in several Danish maritime communities, including Svendborg. Local shipowners began violating the monopoly here and elsewhere by forming local community-based insurance associations.[249]

In Svendborg, local shipowners established such an association in 1842. However, enforcement of the national monopoly led the courts to dissolve the association in 1847. However, as the new Danish Constitution of 1849 discontinued the monopoly, the dismantling of the association was annulled in 1850. By 1852, the association insured 119 vessels and a sizable economic reserve was established in the following years.[250] By the 1890s, vessels had grown in size and value, and the 30,000 DKK that previously marked the maximum insurable value had become insufficient. In response to this higher risk, a second local association was established in 1900, a year after the debate. The new association was economically independent but managed within the organisational framework of the existing

[246] Christopher Kingston, 'Marine Insurance in Britain and America, 1720-1844: A Comparative Institutional Analysis', *The Journal of Economic History* 67, no. 2 (2007): 379–409, https://www.jstor.org/stable/4501157.

[247] Viggo Bentzon, *Den Danske Søret* (G.E.C. Gad's Universitetsboghandel, 1899), 568.

[248] Christian Thorsen, *Det Kongelig Oktroierede Sø-Assurance Kompagni 1726-1926 - Et bidrag til dansk søforsikrings historie* (København: Det Kongelig Oktroierede Sø-Assurance Kompagni v/ Harald Jensens Bogtrykkeri, 1926).

[249] Bentzon, *Den Danske Søret*, 568; Karsten Hermansen, 'Søassurance i Marstal i Årene 1825-1925', *Marstal Søfartsmuseums Aarbog*, 1998, 49–63; Møller Nielsen, *Svendborg Søfarts Historie siden 1253*, 179.

[250] Møller Nielsen, *Svendborg Søfarts Historie siden 1253*, 179.

association. The underwriting insurance risk of the new association quickly reached two million DKK, which in effect, meant that the financial risk under the management of the two associations had almost doubled. The low-cost local marine insurance was in high demand, and the higher value and rising number of ships resulted in a higher underwriting insurance risk within the community.[251]

Interestingly, in 1897, the general assembly of the local association rejected a proposal to allow for the insurance of iron- and steel-hulled (steam) ships.[252] Had the insurance of more expensive vessels constructed of iron and steel been allowed, these insurance pay-outs would most likely have left the community. Since the local community lacked the capacity and capability to build or repair ships of this type, the capital would not recirculate through the local socio-economic system.

3.11. Marine insurance and the local socio-technical system

Unlike private and commercial insurance companies, the local associations were non- profit organisations dedicated exclusively to distributing the high economic risk of maritime trade within the community. No owners or shareholders demanded profits, and surpluses on revenue went into the reserve fund for the future benefit of the community. Once a sizable reserve had been established, the local insurance premiums could be lowered to cover only the calculated yearly risks without dividends for shareholders or investors. The local insurance associations thus served a dual purpose. First, they distributed the high risks involved in shipping and the part-ownership of sailing vessels. Consequently, more people were willing to invest in local sailing vessels, thus expanding the pool

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[251] Johannes Olsen, *Svendborg Bys Historie* (Svendborg: Svendborg Amts Museum, 1919), 356–57, https://dis-danmark.dk/bibliotek/907629.pdf; See also Thorsen, *Det Kgl. Okt. Sø-Assurance Kompagni 1726-1926*.
[252] 'Svendborg Søassurance', *Dansk Søfartstidende*, 17 February 1898.

of available investment capital. Notably, the local insurance also provided low-cost insurance premiums giving local shipowners a potential competitive advantage.

In the debate, Møller initially argued that the overall profitability of the local sailing vessels was primarily the result of these low insurance premiums made available by Svendborg Søassurance.[253] In Møller's view, instead of benefitting the community, the low-cost insurance premiums had become a potentially fatal financial risk to the association and a psychological liability to the community by distorting the competitive position of the sailing vessels. With the rising value of the vessels insured, he argued that a few unfortunate years could deplete the accumulated reserves of the insurance fund. Without cheap insurance, the profits from sailing ships would disappear as premiums would rise to competitive market rates.[254]

The financial accounts from Svendborg Søassurance – some made public as the debate unfolded – appear to support Møller's point. A report from the general assembly of Svendborg Søassurance in 1897 shows pay-outs for three shipwrecks (an average of 7,661 DKK per ship) and eighteen accidents with a total pay-out of 38,500 DKK. The entire liability had increased by 59,400 DKK that year and now amounted to 2.4 million DKK.[255] A similar report from the general assembly in March 1899 showed a reserve of 289,541 DKK, a liability of 2.4 million DKK, and a yearly deficit of 65,300 DKK in

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[253] Mærsk Møller, 'Skibsfarten fra Svendborg og Omegn: 18 February 1899'; Mærsk Møller, 'Skibsfarten Fra Svendborg Og Omegn: 27. February 1899'; Peter Mærsk Møller, 'Skibsfarten Fra Svendborg Og Omegn: 27. March 1899', *Svendborg Amtstidende*, 27 March 1899, No. 73 edition.

[254] Mærsk Møller, 'Skibsfarten fra Svendborg og Omegn: 18 February 1899'; Mærsk Møller, 'Skibsfarten Fra Svendborg Og Omegn: 27. February 1899'; Peter Mærsk Møller, 'Skibsfarten Fra Svendborg Og Omegn: 16. March 1899', *Svendborg Amtstidende*, 16 March 1899, No 64 edition.

[255] *Dansk Søfartstidende*. 'Svendborg Søassurance'. 17 February 1898.

1898.[256] At this rate, the reserve fund would be depleted in less than five years. Nevertheless, Ring-Andersen downplayed the liability in his response to Møller:

> *Hopefully, it will not happen that ten ships will be wrecked in one year, and the [association's] reserve fund will be lost. Regarding this, I think that Mr Møller is calculating the risk too high ... It almost seems as if Mr Møller wishes the low-cost marine insurance to wear away since it underpins the profits of the sailing vessels. However, why don't the steamers establish a similar institution?*[257]

Møller ignored the last question and instead made the argument more personal. He related the whole issue to a recently launched three-masted schooner from Andersen's shipyard anchored in Svendborg harbour:

> *... it is beautiful and most likely as advantageous and excellent a ship as it is possible to build. Nevertheless, it is already obsolete, even before its first voyage. It is only with the assistance of the low-cost insurance premiums, enabled through earlier prosperity, that it is possible to get a return on the capital invested in the ship.*[258]

By praising the quality and craftsmanship of the vessel, Møller avoided criticising Andersen's craftsmanship. However, pointing to a specific ship stirred emotions in other community members. Enter the sharp, sarcastic voice of H.A. Hansen, the corresponding shipowner of the newly built schooner:

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[256] Quoted in Hornby, *Ved rettidig Omhu...*, 38.
[257] Ring Andersen, 'Skibsfarten Fra Svendborg Og Omegn: 20. March 1899'.
[258] Mærsk Møller, 'Skibsfarten Fra Svendborg Og Omegn: 16. March 1899'.

Mr Møller describes wooden sailing vessels as obsolete, even before they have embarked on their first voyage … their profitability and use are soon to be over, and he denies the owners in this region the ability to keep an eye to present developments. By clinging to old habits, and only with the help of the low-cost premiums in Svendborg, they manage to produce a meagre dividend. He dismisses the shipowners who persist in investing in sailing ships as having no eye for the developments, thus facing personal ruin.[259]

Hansen went on by challenging the claim that the reserves in the insurance fund originated from savings made in earlier times of prosperity. In his view, this was a complete misinterpretation of the past. Instead, he argued that the local insurance premium was, in some cases, higher than on the international market. Furthermore, he proposed raising the maximum value of the insured ship, as the subsequent higher premiums would only benefit the association and help keep the premium rates low.[260] J.P. Hansen quickly supported the argument:

Mr Møller goes on about our low-cost marine insurance, which we are so pleased with, but let us use it and agree to protect it by continually insuring our new locally built vessels, for it is mainly these new vessels that maintain the low premiums because of their condition and resilience.[261]

[259] Hansen, 'Skibsfarten Fra Svendborg Og Omegn: 5. April 1899'.
[260] Hansen.
[261] Hansen, 'Skibsfarten Fra Svendborg Og Omegn: 7. April 1899'.

Following these comments, Møller seemed to have realised that his line of argument would win him few local supporters. Despite including the issue in his first three letters, he did not mention the subject of local low-cost insurance again.

Initially, it appears Møller wanted to use the insurance issue to draw attention to two aspects. Firstly, he firmly believed that the contemporary local insurance association carried a financial risk and created a mirage by inflating profits from sailing ships and drawing attention away from the entrepreneurial potential of the steamship. Secondly, he shifted his rhetorical strategy from dissolving the socio-technical systems of sailing vessels to appro- priating them for his objectives. He linked the innovative and entrepreneurial foresight of earlier shipowners from the community to his idea of transformational steamship ventures. He suggested a path forward for his imagined future with investments in steam as the main driver:

> *Although one wishes the [local] marine insurance [association] all the luck and fortune in the future, it will not stop the progress of our time ... It is not that one should ignore what one has and praise the shipowners ... who gave thought to the future and established marine insurance, which benefits the present. Instead, it is time for us to look ahead and plant a seed that might grow to replace what was planted in the past.*[262]

Through its success and non-profit organisation, the marine insurance association in Svendborg had become a deeply embedded part of the socio-technical system of organising within the community. Its non-profit business model gave local shipowners a competitive advantage in the market. At the same time, it enabled capital utilisation from a growing number of small investors, thus expanding the available

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[262] Mærsk Møller, 'Skibsfarten Fra Svendborg Og Omegn: 27. March 1899'.

capital for shipbuilding, innovation, and entrepreneurial action. The institution had worked well for the community in the past. However, divergent opinions about its implications, value, and future role within the community became a central issue of the dichotomy between the socio-technical systems of sail and steam.

3.12. Futures materialized

So, what happened in Svendborg after the debate? Did the protagonists act on their imag- ined future, or was the debate just rhetoric and personal animosity? To answer this question, two observations are of immediate interest here. Firstly, focussing on the four main protag- onists, it would eventually be the next generation – the sons – that would drive the entre- preneurial activity that followed the debate. Secondly, any analysis of future success or failure and subsequent entrepreneurial activity of the main historical actors depends on the time frame we apply and sensitivity to comparison influenced by hindsight.

In 1902 Møller, once again, failed to secure local financial backing for a steamship company. However, with support from his son A.P. Møller, a steamship company based in Svendborg was eventually established in 1904. Nevertheless, a combination of Møller's insistence on establishing the company in Svendborg and continual local scepticism towards the venture remained an issue for the company's management for years to come. When setting up the company in 1904, the initial investment was 150,000 DKK, supplemented by an equal amount in bank loans. Half of the total investment, of 150,000, came from Møller's immediate net- work, including family and friends, hoping the remaining half could be raised within the Svendborg community. After spending more than a month networking and knocking on doors, they could still not secure the required investments. In a letter to his elder brother Hans, A.P. Møller echoed his father's frustrations: "We will get a boat sometime, but whether it be in

Svendborg is doubtful."[263]

Local objections targeted the size of the managing shipowner's salary. With A.P. Møller insisting that the proposed fee was far below the norm in Copenhagen, the negotiations mirrored the dichotomy between Svendborg and Copenhagen from the 1899 debate.

Another primary contention was the demand that the managing shipowner resides in Svendborg. At first, it posed no problem, as P.M. Møller would initially occupy the position. However, the son and dedicated successor, A.P. Møller, opposed the provision fervently because he would have to give up his current well-paid job with a Copenhagen steamship company.[264] Contentions were eventually worked out in favour of the community, and on the 16th April, 1904, the steamship company *A/S Dampskibsselskabet Svendborg* became a reality. Notably, apart from P.M. Møller and his son, the Board of Directors included two merchants, an industrialist, and a lawyer, but no one from the local maritime community.[265]

Regarding the 1899 debate about the high risk of putting all the eggs into one 'steamship' basket, it is worth noticing that the total investments in the company amounted to 150,000 DKK. Such a significant investment would have carried considerable risk to individuals or even groups of investors from the sailing vessel community. It would have potentially moved substantial assets out of the community (at least for a while). This capital would only return to the community if or when the company was successful.

The company, however, did have significant and rapid success. The first year of operation saw a nine percent return to shareholders. Notably, the success prompted local investors to ask whether the accumulated assets in the company would be shared with new investors? The standard procedure for part-owned sailing vessels

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[263] Quoted in Hornby, *Ved rettidig Omhu...*, 38.
[264] Hornby, 37–39.
[265] Hornby, 39–40.

was to pay the total profits annually. In contrast, A.P. Møller wanted to concentrate and consolidate the gains in the company. In a letter to his father in 1905, he argued that "everybody will be better off by making the company strong. Accidents can happen, and the companies that have been reluctant to pay out yields are better prepared … We are working for the future."[266]

With the success of the original company, A.P. Møller kept continually pushing for expansion and investment in new ships. However, the Svendborg investors – including his father – urged caution. As a result, A.P. Møller used his share of profits from the first company to set up a new company in Copenhagen in 1912.[267] Evidently, the old contentions were still very much present. When specific initiatives were unacceptable to the partners in Svendborg, he would go ahead without them using the framework of the new company.

P.M. Møller would continually defend the original company's roots in Svendborg. When A.P. Møller suggested a merger of the two companies in 1918 his father commented sharply that this would mean that one company would consume the other. In a sarcastic tone, he asked whether the plan was "to move the company office to Svendborg and make it a Svendborg company or is it to be a Copenhagen company?"[268] The dual company structure of the Mærsk company would eventually continue long after Peter Mærsk Møller's death in 1927. The two companies only merged in 2003.[269]

The shipyard owner Jørgen Ring-Andersen died in 1901. As with the Mærsk family, the next generation became instrumental in the entrepreneurial activity of the family shipyard in the following years. Despite Ring-Andersen's cautious approach to steamships, his eldest son

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[266] Quoted in Hornby, 43.
[267] Hornby, 68–72.
[268] Quoted in Hornby, 74–75.
[269] 'Maersk History Timeline', Maersk.com, 2022, https://www.maersk.com/about/our-history/explore-our-history.

became an apprentice at a steel shipyard in Copenhagen. On the son's return to Svendborg, the family did establish a local steel shipyard. However, during World War I, the shipyard faced the prospect of fierce local competition from a potential rival steel shipyard. Judging that the steel shipyard did not have the necessary assets to engage in direct com- petition with a rival – and perhaps in a reflection on the cautious approach of the father – the steel shipyard was sold and re-organised into a joint-stock company in 1916. The original investors were almost exclusively from the local community, including the Mærsk family. In 1926 the steel shipyard went bankrupt, but local investments managed a reconstruction. The steel shipyard finally closed in 1996.[270]

In a notable affirmation of Ring-Andersen's imagined future, the original wooden shipyard is still in business today and is located in Svendborg. The shipyard continually built, repaired, and refitted commercial wooden sailing vessels, including fishing vessels, until 1975. Since then, the building of private yachts and repair work has formed the core of the business.[271]

Moving on, we find that H.A. Hansen had continual success and expanded the fleet under his control up until the 1920s. Despite his resistance to steam in 1899, he invested in and managed a steamship in 1909. The ship, however, was sold only two years later. When H.A. Hansen died in 1922, numerous sailing vessels were still operating from Svendborg. However, under the management of his son, the family's economic engagement in traditional wooden sailing ships finally ended in the early 1930s, some 30 years after the debate.[272] Overall, the number and the total tonnage of sailing vessels in Svendborg grew until 1905 before slipping back to 1899 levels around 1914. During the Great War, freight rates and profits were as high as ever, and not until after

[270] Jensen, *Ring Andersens værft - fire generationer på Frederiksøen.*
[271] Jensen; See also Herbert Karting and Thorsten Tietjen, *J. Ring-Andersen Skibsværft: Træskibsbyggeri i Svendborg siden 1867* (Bremen: Hauschild, 2011).
[272] Jansen, 'Skibsfarten Fra Svendborg Og Omegn - En Læserbrevsfejde Fra 1899'.

the war did a continual decline begin.[273] Thus, despite the overall crisis and decline of sailing ships, parts of the community's socio-technical system survived long after the debate.

The best proponent for this is the shipping company AES set up by local entrepreneur A.E. Sørensen in 1918. From these humble beginnings in traditional sailing vessels, the company slowly modernised its fleet by supplementing sails with small diesel engines before eventually moving into modern motor-powered coasters. By 1935 the AES was the largest shipping company in Svendborg and, by 1939, the largest in Denmark outside of Copenhagen. It is worth noting that in the financial crisis of the 1920s, the company successfully incorporated surplus local capital into seven single-ship companies using the traditional part-ownership. The part-ownership model was retained until 1945, after which ownership was gradually concentrated in one company. AES operated successfully out of Svendborg until 1974. In 1987, after seventy years of operations, the company sold its last ship.[274]

Overall, the Svendborg community still retains much of its maritime heritage and culture to this day. The harbour still contains a working maritime environment with repair yards, shops, pilot service, and shipbrokers (Svendborg Havn - Erhverv, 2021, accessed 7 December 2021). Svendborg is also the home of SIMAC, one of the two nautical colleges in Denmark and one of the two remaining maritime schools in Denmark.[275]

[273] Christiansen, *Med skibet i kroppen*, 147–56.
[274] Møller Nielsen, *Svendborg Søfarts Historie siden 1253*, 106–17.
[275] 'Maritime Educational Institutions in Denmark', ufm.dk/uddannelse/videregaende-uddannelse/maritime-uddannelsesinstitutioner, 2021, https://ufm.dk/uddannelse/videregaende-uddannelse/maritime-uddannelsesinstitutioner/om-de-maritime-uddannelsesinstitutioner/oversigt-over-de-maritime-uddannelsesinstitutioner.

3.13. Conclusions

As the debate within the maritime community in Svendborg shows, local entrepreneurs constructed competing imaginary futures based on interpretations of the past and present contexts in which they operated. In Svendborg, the cultural embeddedness of cooperative maritime culture created suspicion and inertia against the implications of an organisational and material transformation from sail to steam. The heart of the issue was the dichotomy between a traditional socio-technical system of the sailing vessel and that of the new steamship.

Leading members of the existing maritime community voiced distrust towards the mod- ern industrial organisation represented locally by a narrative of Copenhagen *otherness* imbued with negative images of the joint-stock companies, industrial financiers, and well-paid steamship company directors, locally interpreted as harmful and in opposition to the community's existing cooperative and interdependent socio-technical system.

When transformative and entrepreneurial action was called for, the maritime community in Svendborg also suffered constraints from past and present prosperity and the success of its existing socio-economic organisations. The community's shared narrative highlighted this past and present prosperity and a specific "business-like approach"[276] based on experience and a traditional way of doing things. Confronted by the proposed (and very potential) demise of sailing ships, the community was unwilling (or perhaps unable) to imagine and commit to the projected rationale of modern steamships as it carried an asserted higher risk and an undesirable future for the community as a whole.

Crucially, the competing imagined futures presented in the debate in Svendborg inherently include moral, cultural, and social community components in their estimations of prosperity and peril,

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[276] Hansen, 'Skibsfarten Fra Svendborg Og Omegn: 28. June 1899'.

not exclusively economic and market-related issues and rationales. Furthermore, when communities imagine through public discourse, questions arise around temporal horizons in projecting the future and sensitive considerations about existing socio-technical systems. Whereas Møller's steamship future broke radically with the past and prioritised a long-term future, the community's imagined future contrasted this by foregrounding a continuous and unfolding link between the past, present and future.

This article highlights how entrepreneurs create imagined futures based on a conceptualisation of contexts such as facts, spatial and temporal orientations, community beliefs and values, as well as narratives about the past and present. Within communities, context can thus be both constituted or enacted *by* entrepreneurial activity and constitutive *of* entrepreneurial activity by influencing how individual entrepreneurs and entrepreneurial groups engage with entrepreneurial opportunities and activities.

This study argues that entrepreneurs evaluate future business opportunities individually *and* collectively. Communities play an important role in shaping entrepreneurial action by influencing how entrepreneurs evaluate and negotiate future business opportunities. The crucial entrepreneurial act of imagining futures emerges as a collective endeavour embedded in cultural communities, which underlines community influence as an important but so far under-theorized and under-conceptualised context for understanding entrepreneurship.

Last but not least, it suggests that communities imagine through public discourse in which individuals exchange projections and imaginary futures. Consequently, social community plays an essential role in envisioning entrepreneurial ventures and shaping entrepreneurial action. Here the article points to the importance of contextualising entrepreneurship from the entrepreneur's perspective, highlighting how entrepreneurs use context to conceptualise the

imagined futures that form a crucial element in envisioning entrepreneurial ventures.

Chapter 4. Reconfiguring authority at sea: Steamships and their captains in a Danish context

Morten Tinning (Forthcoming-b)

4.1. Abstract

This article looks at the transition from sail to steam in shipping as a lived, experienced and narrated seafaring experience. When the close-knit, heterotopic character of the sailing ship disappeared, a traditional notion of 'craft' was replaced by skills and social relations linked to a new industrial workplace. This essay investigates how this transition affected the authority of Danish sea captains, the formal and informal hierarchies on aboard, and especially how these changes were perceived, made sense of and narrated by contemporary Danish seafarers. The study's theoretical framework draws on Max Weber's tripartite definition of authority: 1) *Traditional authority* (authority by custom), 2) *charismatic authority* (authority by a uniquely personal gift of grace), and *rational-legal authority* (authority by legal statute or competence and rooted in rationally created rules). This theoretical approach provides a toolkit and terminology that allows for a description and exploration of how shipboard authority was reconfigured in an interplay between technology, social structures, and social action and to explore how actors interact with one another to make sense of their world.

4.2. Introduction

Until the twentieth century, few positions of authority paralleled that of the merchant sea captain while the ship was at sea.[277] The captain "is lord paramount," wrote the American sailor R. H. Dana, Jr. in the late 1830s. "He is accountable to no one, and must be obeyed in everything, without a question, even from his chief officer."[278] Since the Late Middle Ages, maritime law and practices increasingly institutionalised this sovereignty of command.[279] So ubiquitous had the concept of the captain's authority become by the nineteenth century that maritime literary classics such as Herman Melville's *Moby Dick* (1851)[280] and *Billy Budd* (1891/1962)[281], William Clark Russel's *The Wreck of the Grosvenor* (1877)[282], and Joseph Conrad's *Mirror of the Sea* (1906)[283] feature the authority of the ship's captain as a vehicle for addressing broader issues of power relations and human freedom.

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[277] The title of captain entered the vocabulary of merchant shipping in the early eighteenth century. By the early twentieth century the title captain was used progressively in legislation and official documents. However, the older title of master (mariner), has remained in use until the present-day and the two designations – master and captain are often used synonymously. Weiburst, *Deep Sea Sailors: A Study in Maritime Ethnology*, 341; Jann M. Witt, "'During the Voyage Every Captain Is Monarch of the Ship': The Merchant Captain from the Seventeenth to the Nineteenth Century', *International Journal of Maritime History* 13, no. 2 (1 December 2001): 165 + note 2, https://doi.org/10.1177/084387140101300211.

[278] Richard Henry Dana Jr., *Two Years Before the Mast. A Personal Narrative of Life at Sea*, Allison's Select Library (New York: W.L. Allison, 1840), 13.

[279] Witt, "'During the Voyage Every Captain Is Monarch of the Ship'", 166–67; See also Weiburst, *Deep Sea Sailors: A Study in Maritime Ethnology*, 353.

[280] Herman Melville, *Moby Dick*, Penguin Popular Classics (London: Penguin Group, 1851).

[281] Herman Melville, *Billy Budd* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962) The original manuscript was left unfinished at Melvilles death in 1891. It was later published by Constable & Co. in England in 1924. What is widely considered the final version was published by Chicago University Press in 1962.

[282] W. Clark Russell, *The Wreck of the Grosvenor*, Reprint (London: McBooks Press, 1877).

[283] Joseph Conrad, *The Mirror of the Sea. Memories and Impressions.* (London: Methuen, 1906).

Until the late nineteenth century, captains also played a vital role in the commercial activities of a vessel. Although the level of the captain's business responsibilities varied depending on the specific sector and the shipowner's preferences, most captains managed some, if not all, of the commercial aspects of the ship.[284]

Yet, even deeply embedded concepts, such as the authority of the ship captain, evolve. In the late nineteenth century, the merchant ship captain's role, responsibilities and authority changed fundamentally. The prime impetus for this change was steam power and the arrival of new communication tools, such as cabled and later wireless telegraphy.[285] Indeed, so profound was the metamorphosis of the captain's role and duties that, in 1900, the British sailor and maritime author F.T. Bullen characterised the captain of a sailing ship and the captain of a steamship as members of two altogether different professions.[286]

While the impact of this new technology on the commercial responsibilities of the captain has been thoroughly reviewed by maritime historians, the transformation of the captain's shipboard authority has so

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[284] Davis, *The Rise of the English Shipping Industry in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries by Ralph Davis*, 159–74; See also Robin Craig, 'Printed Guides for Master Mariners as a Source of Productivity Change in Shipping, 1750-1914.', *Journal of Transport History*, 3rd, III, no. No. 2 (1982): 22–36; Yrjö Kaukiainen, 'Owners and Masters: Management and Managerial Skills in the Finish Ocean-Going Merchant Fleet, c. 1840-1889', in *Management and Industrial Relations in Maritime Industries; Essays in International Maritime and Business History* (St. John's, 1994), 51–66; Helen Doe, 'Power, Authority and Communications: The Role of the Master and the Managing Owner in Nineteenth-Century British Merchant Shipping', *International Journal of Maritime History* 25, no. 1 (2013): 103–25, https://doi.org/10.1177/084387141302500106.

[285] Lars U. Scholl, 'The Global Communications Industry and Its Impact on International Shipping before 1914', in *Global Markets: The Internationalization of the Sea Transport Industries since 1850*, ed. David J. Starkey and Gelina Harlaftis, Research in Maritime History 14 (St. John's: Liverpool University Press, 1998), 195–216; Yrjö Kaukiainen, 'Shrinking the World: Improvements in the Speed of Information Transmission, c. 1820–1870', *European Review of Economic History* 5, no. 1 (1 April 2001): 1–28, https://doi.org/10.1017/S1361491601000016.

[286] Frank Thomas Bullen, *The Men of the Merchant Service, Being the Polity of the Mercantile Marine for Longshore Readers*, 1st ed. (London: John Murray, 1900), 26.

far received less attention.[287] A notable exception is E. Sager's work on the 'industrialisation' of seafaring labour.[288] Sager argues that the steamship introduced new types of specialised work, a more complex 'industrial' division of labour, and a new authority structure. Compared to a sailing ship, the steamship increased the uniformity and monotony of seafaring work and the autonomy under which it was performed. Within this new structure, specialised knowledge, increased supervision, and social distance took precedence in reconfiguring the captain's authority and reinforcing the power of management.[289] Complementing Sager's work, this article explores the effects of new mobility (steam) and communications tools (telegraphy) on the captain's role, responsibilities, and authority.

4.3. Background, material and theoretical approach

Steamships were introduced in Denmark as early as 1819, but as in most other countries, steamships did not play a significant role until the 1860s.[290] From then on, steamships took on a progressively dominating role in Danish shipping, culminating in the 1890s, when a rise in freight rates doubled Danish steamship tonnage within a decade, making steamships predominant. This development did not mean that sailing ships did not matter or prosper in late nineteenth-century Danish

[287] Scholl, 'The Global Communications Industry and Its Impact on International Shipping before 1914'; See also Williams, 'Introduction: The World of Shipping'; Kaukiainen, 'Shrinking the World'; Doe, 'Power, Authority and Communications'.
[288] Eric W. Sager, *Seafaring Labour: The Merchant Marine of Atlantic Canada 1820-1914*; Eric W. Sager, 'Seafaring Labour in Maritime History and Working-Class History', *International Journal of Maritime History* 2, no. 1 (1 June 1990): 259–74, https://doi.org/10.1177/084387149000200114; Eric W. Sager, *Ships and Memories: Merchant Seafarers in Canada's Age of Steam* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1993).
[289] Eric W. Sager, *Seafaring Labour: The Merchant Marine of Atlantic Canada 1820-1914*, 245–65 (Chapter 8); See also Sager, *Ships and Memories*, 71–84 (Chapter 4).
[290] Holger Munchaus Petersen, *Planmæssig ankomst: Danske dampskibe indtil 1870 I*, Firskeri- og Søfartsmuseets maritime skrifter 3 (Esbjerg: Fiskeri- og Søfartsmuseet, 1983), 6–10.

shipping. Indeed, an all-time peak in sailing ship tonnage was reached in 1876, and it was not until 1898 that the total Danish steamship tonnage surpassed that of sailing ships. Whereas growth and prosperity in sailing ships were centred in several maritime communities in the Funen Archipelago, the drive towards steamships was heavily concentrated in the capital of Copenhagen.[291]

This article offers a bottom-up analysis, focusing on seafarers' perceptions and experiences by deploying diaries and memoirs from Danish seafarers combined with the commentaries of contemporaneous observers such as the British sailor and author F. T. Bullen. This approach allows for greater sensitivity to the subtle transformations in the day-to-day enactment and reality of command at sea. Moreover, an experience-based analysis facilitates a more fine-grained exploration of the varied experiences of different groups of seafaring crews, which have arguably remained under-explored so far.[292]

Although the primary source material is primarily from a Danish context, the article retains an international scope since maritime labour markets in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century were largely international.[293] Indeed, the narratives of Danish seafarers of the period included labour experiences from Danish, Swedish, Norwegian, British, German, French, Russian, and American ships.[294]

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[291] Møller, Detlefsen, and Johansen, *Sejl og damp, 1870-1920*, 5:7–39; See also Hornby, 'Dansk Skibsfart 1870-1940: Nogle Hovedlinier i Udviklingen'.

[292] Notable exceptions include H. Campbell McMurray, 'Technology and Social Change at Sea: The Status and Position on Board of the Ship's Engineer, Circa 1830-60', in *Working Men Who Got Wet*, ed. Rosemary Ommer and Gerald Panting (Fourth Conference of the Atlantic Canada Shipping Project, Maritime History Group Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1980), 35–50; Enric Garcia, 'Losing Professional Identity? Deck Officers in the Spanish Merchant Marine, 1868–1914', *International Journal of Maritime History* 26, no. 3 (1 August 2014): 451–70, https://doi.org/10.1177/0843871414542735.

[293] Hans Chr Johansen, 'Danish Sailors, 1570-1870', in *'Those Emblems of Hell'?: European Sailors and the Maritime Labour Market, 1570-1870*, ed. Van Royen Paul, Bruijn Jaap R., and Jan Lucassen, 1998, 239.

[294] Johansen, 250–51.

This article's limited length and broad scope do not allow for numerous and detailed recounts. Therefore, I have limited myself to presenting the perceptions and experiences that enable us to best capture the essence of the article's arguments.

To better explore the shifts in the structure of the captain's authority over time, the article relies on Max Weber's classic tripartite definition of authority: 1) *Traditional authority* (authority by custom), 2) *charismatic authority* (authority by a uniquely personal gift of grace), and *rational-legal authority* (authority by legal statute or competence and rooted in rationally created rules).[295] Weber's three *ideal types* of authority foreground dimensions and forms of authority that help clarify the command of the captain. In an empirical analysis over time, the enactment of authority is arguably best described as a combination of several types of authority, showing shifting priorities. Based on the Weberian *ideal types*, the article suggests that adaptation and transformation of the captain's authority are fittingly described as reconfiguring the relationship between *traditional*, *charismatic,* and *rational-legal authority*. While the captain's overall authority did not vanish, its form and underlying rationale changed qualitatively in this period of time. Such a reconfiguration of authority can be hard to capture in legal texts and court cases alone. Yet, through the eyes of the seafarers, we get a glimpse of how the enactment of authority changed, how this was perceived, and how this perception changed with the transition from sail to steam.

While the Weberian ideal types provide a helpful tool for capturing the qualitative reconfiguration of the captain's authority, they do not incorporate technology's critical impact on the maritime world in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.[296] To understand the link

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[295] Max Weber, *Politics as a Vocation by Max Weber, in 'Weber's Rationalism and Modern Society' Edited and Translated by Tony Waters and Dagmar Waters*, trans. Tony Waters and Dagmar Waters, 2015.
[296] Max Weber, 'Objectivity in Social Science and Social Policy', in *The Methodology of the Social Sciences*, ed. E.A. Shils, trans. H.A. Finch (New York: Free Press, 1904), 90.

between forms of authority, on the one hand, and technological change, on the other hand, I furthermore rely on the foundational body of literature on *socio-technical systems*.

This literature found that the increased scale and technical complexity of coal mining – arguably, a semi-isolated work situation somewhat comparable to seafaring – brought into existence a new managerial, organisational, and social work structure similar to the one described in maritime labour by Eric Sager.[297] The argument here is that the reconfiguration of the captain's authority and the link between technological change and social organisation described by socio-technical systems theory can help explain the fundamental changes and adaptations in the structure of the sea captain's authority that evolved during the transition from sail to steam.

4.4. The shifting role, responsibilities and authority of the captain ca. 1300-1850

For centuries maritime law underpinned and reflected the changing reality of seafaring command. Sometimes maritime law would codify already existing traditions or practices. At other times, it would have a more progressive purpose of reforming existing practices based on an economic, political, social, or labour-related rationale. While the former codification process dominated until the sixteenth century, the latter process became progressively more important in the following centuries, culminating between the mid-nineteenth century and the mid-twentieth century.[298]

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[297] Trist and Bamforth, 'Some Social and Psychological Consequences of the Longwall Method of Coal-Getting' See for example p. 8-9; See also Trist, 'The Evolution of Socio-Technical-Systems', 67.

[298] Edda Frankot, 'Medieval Maritime Law from Oléron to Wisby: Jurisdictions in the Law of the Sea', in *Communities in European History: Representations, Jurisdictions, Conflicts*, ed. Juan Pan-Montojo and Frederik Pedersen (Pisa: Pisa University Press, 2007), 151–72; Edda Frankot, *Of Laws of Ships and Shipmen: Medieval Maritime Law and Its Practice in Urban Northern Europe* (Edinburgh University Press, 2012),

Maritime law began to reflect the captain's bifocal nautical and commercial responsibility in the late Middle Ages.[299] However, while every captain possessed nautical and navigational skills, the commercial prowess varied, and the level of responsibility bestowed on the captain was left to the ship owners' discretion. Mutual obligations were established through employment contracts. Maritime law granted captains great authority and disciplinary power to fulfil the contract with the shipowner.[300] By the late eighteenth century, the principle that any ship's nautical and administrative responsibilities at sea rested solely with the captain was firmly institutionalised in maritime law.[301] Although maritime law and social convention acted as a bulwark against excessive abuse of power, it was only in severe or unusual cases that charges would be brought against the captain and only when the ship had returned to port.[302]

https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/of-laws-of-ships-and-shipmen/61E173A9C7619C2F824B52D1E7153636; Leon Fink, *Sweatshops at Sea: Merchant Seamen in the World's First Globalized Industry, from 1812 to the Present* (University of North Carolina Press, 2011), chaps 2-3 in particular, https://doi.org/10.1215/15476715-1461266; See also Nicolette Jones, *The Plimsoll Sensation: The Great Campaign to Save Lives at Sea* (Hachette UK, 2013); For this development in a Danish context, see Viggo Bentzon, *Den danske søret - forelæsninger af Dr. Juris Viggo Bentzon* (København: G.E.C. Gads Universitetsboghandel, 1899), 1–21; Also Louis E. Grandjean, *Frederik IIs Søret - Et erhvervshistorisk kulturbillede fra 1561* (Copenhagen: Chr. Eriksen, 1946); Jørgensen, *Arbejdere Til Søs 1870-1911*.

[299] Frankot, 'Medieval Maritime Law', 152; Witt, '"During the Voyage Every Captain Is Monarch of the Ship"', 169; See also Charles Abbot, *Treatise of the Law Relative to Merchant Ships and Seamen*, ed. William Shee, 10th ed. (London: Shaw and Sons, 1802), 72 ff; Bentzon, *Den danske søret - forelæsninger af Dr. Juris Viggo Bentzon*, 12 ff; Weiburst, *Deep Sea Sailors: A Study in Maritime Ethnology*, 340; Davis, *The Rise of the English Shipping Industry in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries by Ralph Davis*, 160.

[300] Davis, *The Rise of the English Shipping Industry in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries by Ralph Davis*, 167–68; See also Witt, '"During the Voyage Every Captain Is Monarch of the Ship"'.

[301] Abbot, *Treatise of the Law Relative to Merchant Ships and Seamen*; Witt, '"During the Voyage Every Captain Is Monarch of the Ship"', 166; Bentzon, *Den danske søret - forelæsninger af Dr. Juris Viggo Bentzon*.

[302] Witt, '"During the Voyage Every Captain Is Monarch of the Ship"', 194; For an example from a Danish context, see the description of the journey of the East Indiaman

Ship captains had not always been the dominating figure of authority at sea. In twelfth-century Northern Europe, the captain (or *skipper/Schiffer*) was often a merchant, functioning as *primus inter pares* among other merchants. In such ventures, members would share duties and responsibilities for navigation and handling the vessel, and decisions were ideally made by mutual agreement. However, in the thirteenth century, the roles of the merchant, the shipowner, captain, and crew separated. A new organisational hierarchy appeared in which the captain represented the shipowner, managed the ship autonomously and operated almost independently of the merchants.[303]

From the sixteenth century onwards, sailing vessels designed for long-range open ocean voyages further increased the specialisation and size of the crew, as well as the complexity of navigation and ship management. As some trade voyages lasted months, if not years, an increasingly unified and hegemonic shipboard command structure emerged. As the problems of communication and principal-agent relationships became more complicated, the authority on the largest of ships could be divided between the captain and a commercial representative (*supercargo*). However, in most cases, captains would be responsible for managing both the vessel and the commercial tasks.[304] As R. Davies puts it, the most significant managerial issue facing shipowners in the early modern world was "to find a paragon to be master, and then devise means to assist him if he really were perfect,

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'Prins Frederik' and the subsequent court case against Captain B.L. Højer described in O.D.L. Agerbeck, *Kort Og Ukunstlet Beretning over de Vigtigste Begivenheder, Som Ere Kendtes Mig Fra Min Barndom, Og de Hendelser Og Anekdoter, Som Er Forekomne Mig Mest Mærkværdige i de 44 Aar Jeg Har Faret Til Søes* (København: Minding, 1804), 35–63.

[303] Frankot, 'Medieval Maritime Law', 152.

[304] Kaukiainen, 'Owners and Masters: Management and Managerial Skills in the Finish Ocean-Going Merchant Fleet, c. 1840-1889'.

rescue him if he turned out a fool, and restrain him if he turned out a scoundrel."[305]

This vital commercial role of the captain until the late nineteenth century has been justly recognised by historians.[306] However, despite the complex issues of distance, time and communications, the captain still depended on the managing owner's decisions, financial credits, and retrospective approval.[307] As the nineteenth century progressed, this relationship between the owner and the captain intensified due to the improved communications available through the telegraph and the regular oceanic postal services facilitated by steamships.[308]

In his essay *Owners and Masters*, Kaukiainen recognises that "before the arrival of the telegraph and ocean liners", the captain had a significant say in the business and commercial activity of the vessel. "Indeed, he was more like a manager than a foreman." Pertinent to this article is Kaukiainen's periodisation, identifying the widespread adoption of specific technologies, here telegraph and regular ocean liners, as the turning point. Kaukiainen's analysis focuses on the management system during the "heyday of sail," the suggestion is that new technologies played a crucial role in changing the operational mode

[305] Davis, *The Rise of the English Shipping Industry in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries by Ralph Davis*, 159.
[306] Craig, 'Printed Guides for Master Mariners as a Source of Productivity Change in Shipping, 1750-1914.'; reprinted in Robin Craig, ed., *British Tramp Shipping, 1750–1914* (St. John's: Liverpool University Press, 2003), 121–36; Simon P. Ville, *English Shipowning During the Industrial Revolution: Michael Henley and Son, London Shipowners 1770-1830* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987); Davis, *The Rise of the English Shipping Industry in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries by Ralph Davis*, chapter 8, 159-174; Witt, '"During the Voyage Every Captain Is Monarch of the Ship"'; Hannah Knox Tucker, 'Masters of the Market: Ship Captaincy in the British Atlantic, 1680-1774' (Doctoral Thesis, Virginia, University of Virginia, 2021).
[307] Doe, 'Power, Authority and Communications', 124; See also Kaukiainen, 'Owners and Masters: Management and Managerial Skills in the Finish Ocean-Going Merchant Fleet, c. 1840-1889'.
[308] Scholl, 'The Global Communications Industry and Its Impact on International Shipping before 1914'; Witt, '"During the Voyage Every Captain Is Monarch of the Ship"', 171; Kaukiainen, 'Shrinking the World'; Doe, 'Power, Authority and Communications', 119.

of shipping and hence the role, responsibilities and authority of the sea captain.[309]

4.5. The impact of technology on the commercial role of the captain

The arrival and innovation of the steamship increased the regularity, speed, and control over the ship's movements. At the same time, new means of communication enabled closer and more frequent contact with ship owners, shipping companies, and other land-based authorities. As the isolated world of the sailing ship began to dissolve, the ship, metaphorically speaking, moved 'closer to land' and increased external influence.[310]

With steamships, the demands for efficient and coordinated management of operations increased. This facilitated a move towards tighter and more centralised control as "anything propelled by steam found a ready market; since merchants could calculate, within a short period, the time of arrival of their goods …, and secure the advantages of the prevailing market."[311] One effect of this was a gradual decline in the commercial responsibilities of the captain as more and more operational activities came under the supervision of white-collared employees in shipping company offices.[312]

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[309] Kaukiainen, 'Owners and Masters: Management and Managerial Skills in the Finish Ocean-Going Merchant Fleet, c. 1840-1889', 52; See also Scholl, 'The Global Communications Industry and Its Impact on International Shipping before 1914'; Kaukiainen, 'Shrinking the World'.

[310] For a discussion on the nature and conceptualisation of the isolated world of the sailing ship, see. is Heide Gerstenberger, 'Men Apart: The Concept of "Total Institution" and the Analysis of Seafaring', *International Journal of Maritime History* VIII, no. 1 (June 1996): 173–82, https://doi.org/10.1177/084387149600800110.

[311] Robert Edwards Annin, *Ocean Shipping - Elements of Practical Steamship Operation*, The Century Foreign Trade Series (New York: The Century Co., 1920), 73; See also Mærsk Møller, 'Skibsfarten fra Svendborg og Omegn: 18 February 1899'.

[312] See for example Williams, 'Introduction: The World of Shipping'; Williams and Armstrong, 'An Appraisal of the Progress of the Steamship in the Nineteenth Century'; Also Harley, 'Ocean Freight Rates and Productivity, 1740–1913'; For early aspects of

A principal driver of this development was the exponential growth and wide diffusion of more reliable and faster communications. Here the steamship gradually provided more reliable and regular postal services, while the cabled telegraph revolutionised trade by facilitating near-instantaneous communications.[313] Supported by these new means of communication, shipowners and shipping executives would gradually take over or reduce the captain's commercial responsibilities. 1887, the American captain S. Samuels reflected on this development, complaining that the "shipmaster is now no longer a merchant… Telegraphy now precludes any possibility of a trading voyage" that could benefit "this man, who runs so many risks, and hazards so much, for the poor pittance of an underpaid first-class clerk."[314]

This decrease in management autonomy of the ship is reflected in two incidents drawn from the diaries of F.M.F. Jacobsen. In 1919 the captain of the S/S Morsø fell ill while the ship was La Palice on the French Atlantic coast. In earlier times, Jacobsen, as the first mate, would automatically have assumed command. Now he had to await approval from Copenhagen and not until formal permission was received from the company's agent (who doubled as Danish consul) could he assume command.[315]

In December 1922, Jacobsen complained that the SS Nevada was suddenly ordered to steam out, although short of being fully loaded. "The skipper came from shore with the telegraphic order from the shipping company. It is regrettable that the shipping company can be so

this development see John Armstrong and David M. Williams, 'The Steamship as an Agent of Modernisation, 1812–1840', *International Journal of Maritime History* 19, no. 1 (2007): 145–60, https://doi.org/10.1177/084387140701900108.

[313] Kaukiainen, 'Owners and Masters: Management and Managerial Skills in the Finish Ocean-Going Merchant Fleet, c. 1840-1889'; Kaukiainen, 'Shrinking the World'.

[314] Captain S. Samuels, *From the Forecastle to the Cabin*, 1st Edition (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1887), 1–2.

[315] Frederik Mads Ferdinand Jacobsen, *Fra styrmand til skipper i mellemkrigstiden: Dagbøger 1919-1936*, ed. Berrit Hansen and Hanne Geertsen (København: Forlaget Orte v/Berrit Hansen, 2010), 25–26.

pointlessly reckless that they send a ship out like that, badly trimmed, loss of cargo etc.etc. A lot is happening that we do not understand."[316]

In 1898, steamship captain P. M. Møller commented on this reconfiguration of a steamship's commercial and operational aspects as opposed to sailing ships. He notes that steamship operations are more industrial "as larger sums of money are required" and hence the "operational practices must, to be profitable, be factory-like" and, although "akin to" the operations of a sailing vessel, "it is nonetheless something else."[317]

What had been the realm of authority of the captain, foregrounding his role not just in questions of mobility but also in business, was increasingly reconfigured into a role in the broader network of actors involved in steamship businesses.

4.6. The impact of technology on the nautical responsibilities of the captain

On sailing ships, navigation was the first concern of a captain. The prime quality of a successful captain was knowledge of the best routes to take at any given time of the year and the ability to plot a course that found a minimum of calms and a maximum of favourable winds. This skill noted Bullen, "cannot be learned from weather-books or weather-charts."[318] It was a craft of apprenticeship and experience. A craft to be learned.

New skills and a wide range of specialised functions were needed on steamships to navigate, operate and manage the ship. Most of these functions related directly to the running of the steam engine and the

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[316] Jacobsen, 92.
[317] Mærsk Møller, 'Skibsfarten fra Svendborg og Omegn: 18 February 1899'; See also Tinning, 'Imagined Futures of Sail and Steam - The Role of Community in Envisioning Entrepreneurial Ventures'.
[318] Bullen, *The Men of the Merchant Service, Being the Polity of the Mercantile Marine for Longshore Readers*, 31–32.

emergence of the engine room as a new detached workspace from which emerged a new complex division of labour.[319]

The most notable change in seafaring labour from sail to steam was that the technical issues and responsibility for the ship's propulsion passed from the captain, mates, and sailors on deck to the engineers, firemen, stokers, and trimmers in the engine room. Overall this meant that essential tasks shifted away from the sailor's traditional craft of harnessing the power of the wind to the specialised tending of industrial machinery and the careful management of another natural resource – coal. While authority in all nautical matters, including propulsion, still formally rested with the captain, responsibility for propulsion was now, in reality, partly shared with the chief engineer. Performance, speed, and navigation relied as much on the chief engineer's ability to run a clean machine as on the captain's nautical skills and experience. Even though a steamship captain was expected to be knowledgeable about the workings of the steam engine, he often had to rely on the specialised technical skills of the engine room.

The chief engineer could wilfully or unwillingly impose his own authority on the captain in questions relating to safety, coaling, and fuel reserves. One descriptive incident comes from the diary of the sailor E. Himmelstrup, recounting the journey of the S/S Siam on its way from the Suez Canal to Copenhagen in 1898.

As Siam approached Gibraltar's straits, the issue of coal reserves came up again. The coal on board was expected to take the ship as far as Le Havre, but the Chief Engineer approached the captain four hours before we reached Gibraltar, saying he did not dare continue the journey with the current coal reserves.[320]

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[319] Sager, *Ships and Memories*, 71.
[320] Ejnar Himmelstrup, *Med ØK's SIAM til Østasien 1898 - Jungmand Ejnar Himmelstrups dagbogsoptegnelser*, ed. Erik Jensen (Marstal: Marstal Søfartsmuseum, 2004), 41.

In this case, the captain heeded the chief engineer's warning. In fact, it was the second time on that particular journey that the chief engineer had called a premature coaling stop. The first time had been because of heavy fuel expenditure caused by bad weather and strong headwinds. Although the final authority still rested with the captain, he often had little choice but to comply with the chief engineer's demand for an extra coaling stop.

Just as skilled sailors were essential to a sailing vessel's handling, the firemen's skills in the stokehold could also have a significant effect on the performance of a steamship. The Danish marine engineer E. Jensen distinctly remembers the difference between two firemen on the same journey around 1900:

One would stoke the fire so that the pointer on the pressure gauge was constantly on the red line marking the highest pressure. As you came into the stokehold, he would spend most of the time pacing back and forth with his hands on his back. The other fireman toiled like a beast such that he could barely climb up at the end of his watch, yet he could not keep up the pressure.[321]

If we return to Himmelstrups narrative, it is worth noting that among the crew, Chinese stokers taken on in the East were given as the reason for S/S Siam's need for an extra coaling stop at Gibraltar. Himmelstrup notes: "the Chinese stokers use much more coal to keep the steam going than the European ones."[322] A curious mix of appreciation and depreciation of specialised skills engrained with pronounced racial overtones.

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[321] Eyvind Jensen, 'Eyvind Jensen', in *Fyrbøder Og Maskinmester*, ed. Ole Højrup, Søens Folk - Beretninger Fra Århundredskiftet 4 (Copenhagen: Nationalmuseets Etnologiske Undersøgelse & Christian Ejlers' Forlag, 1986), 120.
[322] Himmelstrup, *Med ØK's SIAM til Østasien 1898*, 41.

The relationship between specialised skills and the captain's ability to make command decisions was more complex in a steamship. Furthermore, in the experience and perception of the different crewmembers, specialised expertise conveyed a new form of informal authority to people other than the captain, reconfiguring the relationship between the captain and his crew.

This development resembles the technological imperative described by socio-technical systems theory, where engineers "would design whatever organization the technology required," The 'people cost' of monotonous tasks and increased supervision was thought to be adequately compensated by improved socio-economic conditions.[323]

At sea, the new organisation seemed to follow a similar technological imperative, where steamship crews were compensated through higher wages. The captain had to be knowledgeable about steam engines to at least retain some measure of nautical authority in issues of propulsion and mobility.

4.7. Corporal punishment in shipboard discipline

The unique position of the captain is also reflected in his patriarchal authority over care and punishments. The captain's shipboard authority and his powers to uphold discipline in the age of sail have been addressed in detail by K. Weiburst in his seminal ethnographic work on life and labour on the open ocean.[324] Redressing the issues, including the relationship between the isolated shipboard authority of the captain and the landed community to which the ship would eventually return, J.M. Witt, points out that despite the hegemonic power granted to captains by maritime law, it "did not imply that his power was absolute but rather

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[323] Trist, 'The Evolution of Socio-Technical-Systems'; Also Trist and Bamforth, 'Some Social and Psychological Consequences of the Longwall Method of Coal-Getting'.
[324] Weiburst, *Deep Sea Sailors: A Study in Maritime Ethnology*. Chapter 11, pp. 354-371 has a detailed description of social relations between superiors and subordinates on board sailing ships.

that he was the sole commander of his vessel under maritime law during a voyage."[325] The seemingly near-dictatorial authority of captains was continually shaped by maritime law, informal rules of behaviour, and the captain's relationship with the shipowner. This argument is strengthened by H. Gerstenberger's article on the willingness of early nineteenth-century German shipowners to break up the social bonds of traditional maritime communities to decrease the social limitations on the master's authority and allow shipowners to pay lower wages.[326]

Despite the potential restraints of informal rules of behaviour and relations to the shipowner, the common principle was that any ship's nautical and administrative responsibilities rested solely with the captain.[327] In 1802, Charles Abbott summarised the existing paradigm of the captain's authority over the crew of the ship. "By the Common Law, the Master has authority over all the mariners on board the ship, and it is their duty to obey his commands … his authority in this respect being analogous to that of a parent over his child, or of a master over his apprentice."[328]

In essence, this meant that the sailor was at the complete mercy of the captain while the ship was at sea and that captains could and would often use (or abuse) their authority without immediate consequences. In severe cases of physical abuse, sailors would desert the ship or seek retribution from the law when the ship entered port. However, there were few options available at sea other than intervention by benevolent

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[325] Witt, '"During the Voyage Every Captain Is Monarch of the Ship"', 175 & 193.
[326] Gerstenberger, 'Men Apart: The Concept of "Total Institution" and the Analysis of Seafaring'; Heide Gerstenberger and Ulrich Welke, *Vom Wind zum Dampf: Sozialgeschichte der deutschen Handelsschiffahrt im Zeitalter der Industrialisierung* (Münster, 1996); Heide Gerstenberger, 'On Maritime Labour and Maritime Labour Markets in Germany, 1700-1900', in *Maritime Labour*, ed. Richard Gorski, Contributions to the History of Work at Sea, 1500-2000 (Amsterdam University Press, 2007), 43–60, https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt6wp638.5.
[327] Witt, '"During the Voyage Every Captain Is Monarch of the Ship"', 166; Seminal works on the history of maritime law see Bentzon, *Den danske søret - forelæsninger af Dr. Juris Viggo Bentzon*.
[328] Abbot, *Treatise of the Law Relative to Merchant Ships and Seamen*, 129.

officers, mutiny, or simply enduring the seafaring culture of violence and brutality "between the devil and the blue sea".[329]

Despite legal regulation and declining social acceptance, the use of corporal punishment and violence was so embedded and institutionalised in seafaring that change only came gradually. Evidence of the continual use of corporal punishment or pure, unadulterated violence is abundant in the diaries and memoirs of Danish seafarers at least as late as the early twentieth century. This was especially true when it came to young and inexperienced crew members. An anecdote from the diary of F.M.F. Jacobsen shows how some captains, as late as 1892, could still transgress the law and social norms with relative impunity. "The captain", writes Jacobsen, "suddenly attacked me like a wild animal and began to beat me with the rope end of the mooring line. You impudent dog?' he screamed excitedly as he flogged my head, body and wherever he could get a good hit. Finally, he hit me across the face, so my eyes swelled terribly."[330] Back on the ship, Jacobsen declared that he would approach the consul and file a complaint. However, he soon abandoned the idea "primarily because I expected no particular understanding or justice from that side either … word among the men has it that the consul always tries to run such issues into the sand and often sides with the captain."[331]

Further evidence of the prevalence of violence can be drawn from a Danish pamphlet published in 1883 by N. A. Vodder, a Danish sailor and navigational teacher. Openly inspired by the educational ideas of Rousseau and the social-evolutionary ideas of Herbert Spencer, the pamphlet reads as a passionate plea for better treatment and paternalistic

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[329] Marcus Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea: Merchant Seamen, Pirates and the Anglo-American Maritime World, 1700 - 1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 205–53.

[330] Frederik Mads Ferdinand Jacobsen, *Fra skonnertfart til ubådskrig: Dagbøger 1889-1918*, ed. Berrit Hansen and Hanne Geertsen (København: Forlaget Orte v/Berrit Hansen, 2008), 83.

[331] Jacobsen, 83.

care of young aspiring sailors. "The sailor has grown up", Vodder writes, "from boy to man in ships where the captain has been a dictator and not always used his powers with the greatest moderation." Vodder goes on to lament how the reproduction of tradition and culture also left young sailors at the mercy of older sailors. It was not uncommon to hear older sailors argue that since they had been beaten as boys, they retained the right to hand out similar treatment. To Vodder, this was quite understandable as "roughness breeds roughness." Yet, it was a vicious circle that needed to be broken.[332]

Public appeals and petitions such as the one from Vodder did resonate with many sailors, politicians, and public opinion.[333] In most European countries, corporal punishment and the disciplinary use of physical violence at sea were made illegal by law in the late nineteenth century.[334] In Denmark, the captain's right to use corporal punishment was removed by law in 1866.[335]

A new disciplinary system was promoted to replace the violent regime of earlier days, including fines and a new social order. Under this order, the captain did retain the right and authority to confine crew members (and passengers) by force if they threatened the ship, cargo, crew, or passenger safety.[336] However, an already existing system of fines was further institutionalised. Since at least the eighteenth century,

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[332] N.A. Vodder, *Om Sømandens Udvikling i Nutid og Fremtid* (København: Andr. Schous Forlag, 1883), 10.

[333] David M. Williams, 'Mid-Victorian Attitudes to Seamen and Maritime Reform: The Society for Improving the Condition of Merchant Seamen, 1867', *International Journal of Maritime History* 3, no. 1 (1 June 1991): 101–26, https://doi.org/10.1177/084387149100300106; Fink, *Sweatshops at Sea: Merchant Seamen in the World's First Globalized Industry, from 1812 to the Present*.

[334] Isaac Land, 'CUSTOMS OF THE SEA Flogging, Empire, and the "True British Seaman" 1770 to 1870', *Interventions* 3, no. 2 (January 2001): 169–85, https://doi.org/10.1080/13698010120059591; See also Fink, *Sweatshops at Sea: Merchant Seamen in the World's First Globalized Industry, from 1812 to the Present*, chap. 2.

[335] Jørgensen, *Arbejdere Til Søs 1870-1911*, 12.

[336] Bentzon, *Den danske søret - forelæsninger af Dr. Juris Viggo Bentzon*, 123–24.

it had been customary for captains to fine crew members for minor offences. These fines were often put in a kind of swear box to be passed on to charities benefitting poor and old sailors.[337] In the diary of F. M. F. Jacobsen quoted earlier, we find an example of how such practices were later used for disciplinary action for offences of a more severe nature. In 1900, a young sailor had gone to sleep during his night watch. The sinner was brought before the master, and judgement was announced immediately:

> *The master was tending his morning toilet, standing with a moustache, hairy chest, soaped head and a barber knife in his hand. "You have slept!" No answer. Will you accept a fine that will go to the poor of the profession?" Still no answer. The master then counted 5 - 10 - 15 – 20 - 25. Still silence. "30!" "Stop", wailed the sinner, and the matter was settled. A debit note was immediately filled and attested, and the sum of 30 kroner was debited from the sinner account.[338]*

A more curious and humorous episode of mixing discipline and help for destitute sailors occurred in 1927. Here a Danish captain fined his crew collectively, arguing that the crew had behaved *so well* that there had been no occasion for fines, thus leaving the poor and destitute sailors with no subsistence. The crew agreed to pay a voluntary fine differentiated by income, with the captain paying a quarter of the fine because of his exceptionally exemplary behaviour.[339]

The first incident shows that even serious offences such as falling asleep on watch could be dealt with in the early twentieth century without resorting to imprisonment, corporal punishment, or violence. The second shows that solidarity with other seafaring workers slowly took on an institutionalised dimension, more characteristic of landed

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[337] Henningsen, 'Sømandens Indsamlingsbøsse'.
[338] Jacobsen, *Fra styrmand til skipper i mellemkrigstiden: Dagbøger 1919-1936*, 20.
[339] Morten Tinning, *Sømandsstiftelsen Bombebøssen, 1819-2019* (Copenhagen: Sømandsstiftelsen Bombebøssen & The Maritime Museum of Denmark, 2019), 80.

industrialisation and unionisation. If we deploy Weber's ideal types of authority, the traditional and charismatic authority of the captain becomes reconfigured as a rational-legal authority based in rules. Some of these rules became so established that they held the seed for new practices and a qualitatively different traditional authority.

4.8. Steamships and the social status of the captain

With steam, social status and a "workplace of structural inequalities" displaced the prominence of the *traditional* and *charismatic* authority of the captain, who ruled by tradition, experience, rough attitude, and violence, and where the captain and the crew often had a common background and seafaring identity. In steamships, the captain's authority increasingly rested on a *rational-legal authority* based on certified superior knowledge and skills, "the bearings of a gentleman", social distance, and "models of dress and behaviour."[340]

Besides the captain's superior skills, the social divide between the captain and the crew was expanded. Instead of a shared bedrock of common seafaring identity, the captain and officers now belonged to an entirely different social class. Progression in rank not only meant better wages but also an embrace of bourgeois culture and identity. On deck, and especially in the engine room, lower-ranking seafarers would increasingly identify with the industrial working class as the opportunities for progress through the ranks narrowed due to increased specialisation. While it was still possible to advance from mess boy to captain, making it from stoker to chief engineer was rare, if not nearly impossible.[341]

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[340] Eric W. Sager, *Seafaring Labour: The Merchant Marine of Atlantic Canada 1820-1914*, 264; See also Sager, *Ships and Memories*, Chapter 4, pp. 71–84.

[341] for a reflection on the work conditions of the stokers, see Gerstenberger, 'Men Apart: The Concept of "Total Institution" and the Analysis of Seafaring'.

One Danish seafarer, J. Ingerslev-Nielsen, remembered a captain on a steamer in 1905 and how he achieved respect and authority through strict expectations of proper, stately, and dignified behaviour.

On watch, we had to be in uniform, with footwear polished spotless and a clean collar. It was in the atmosphere of the ship, and I liked it! There was strict discipline on board. ... [The captain] was a stately and mature man. I was so lucky to get on the right side of him...."[342]

Captains who failed to adhere to these new social norms would lose the crew's respect and have difficulty keeping discipline. In his diary, F. M. F. Jacobsen noted one such encounter with a captain in 1893:

[I] saw the captain on deck today. That is the first time on this voyage. Alas! How he looked miserable, thin, and dishevelled with his four-week-old stubble on his face. Poor man! Has he been ill? Or is it heartache? Because the wife has left him? Nobody knows![343]

Some thirty years later, on a ship in 1925, drunkenness and undignified behaviour caused immediate disrespect.

The captain is a terrible drunk. Today, when we sailed down river heading out to sea, he was dead drunk, leaning on the bridge railings. His legs could not carry him, and he drooled off some terrible nonsense. He's an ugly fellow to look at – Ohh dear - watery eyes. 'Jesus', they call him. I prefer 'the predator' [an earlier brutal, somewhat unreasonable captain]. At least he was sober.[344]

As in earlier times, the captain's status in the late nineteenth century depended on the ship's size and complexity of command. Here, the big ocean liners constituted their own category, and the "enviable

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[342] Ole Højrup, *Dampskibskaptajn*, vol. 8, Søens Folk - Beretninger Fra Århundredskiftet (Copenhagen: Nationalmuseets Etnologiske Undersøgelse & Christian Ejlers' Forlag, 1988), 89.
[343] Jacobsen, *Fra skonnertfart til ubådskrig: Dagbøger 1889-1918*, 103.
[344] Jacobsen, 379.

position" of the captain of a great liner steamship held the most prominent position. "[I]n power, in importance in the eyes of his fellow-men, in comfort, he is far before them. His are the responsibilities, upon him rests the reputation of the ship among the people who pay the piper, the passengers, but beyond that, his life is rightly looked upon by his less fortunate brethren as one long holiday."[345]

Next in prestige came the small ocean-going passenger ships and the large cargo freighters, followed by the "tramp proper … a vessel of large cargo carrying capacity and low power of engines." Lowermost came the steamships "built to sell to the first buyer", who were often owned by "people knowing absolutely nothing of shipping matters."[346] Of importance here, however, is that the captaincy of even the smallest steamship marked a step upward in prestige (and wages) from even the finest sailing ship afloat. Thus "almost any shipmaster is glad to step down from the exalted pinnacle he may have occupied for years as master of a 'wind-jammer' and take a very subordinate position, say, as second, third or even fourth officer in a liner, as a means of rising to the coveted post of commander of such a ship."[347]

Climbing this status ladder required specialised skills and specific schooling that went beyond the practical apprenticeship of the sailing ship sailor. "A successful tramp skipper", wrote Bullen, "is always a good all-round man–something of a diplomat, of a lawyer, of an accountant, of a merchant." More importantly, he had to "contend with crews of the smallest and of the lowest kind of men, who are as far removed from the popular idea of what a sailor is as day is from night." There was no room for misunderstanding the hierarchy between sail and steam.

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[345] Bullen, *The Men of the Merchant Service, Being the Polity of the Mercantile Marine for Longshore Readers*, 13–14.
[346] Bullen, 21.
[347] Bullen, 26; The term "wind-jammer" was used by steamship crews as a contemptuous nickname for sailling ships. See Bullen, 27.

4.9. Ṇostalgia and the legacy of sailing

While one may be tempted to see a sharp divide between sail and steam, the transition occurred in fits and starts. Most Danish seafarers began life at sea on sailing ships until the 1920s. Consequently, most seafarers had experiences in both types of vessels and could compare. For some, the nature of the work and the new division of labour in steamships would trigger a nostalgic longing for life aboard sailing ships. Not even socio-economic compensation in the form of relatively higher wages[348] or improved living conditions on steamers could make up for the loss. Writing in the 1950s, the retired steamship captain J. Ingerslev-Nielsen offered his characterisation of the differences in working conditions, reminiscent of the descriptions of early factory work on the land:

> *I had become accustomed to conditions in a steamship so different from the big sailing ships. The diet was obviously better. Here we got soft bread. Hardtack was not known on board, and the diet was varied. However, the tone and work were different. We removed rust, washed the painted surfaces, stood at the helm or were on the lookout. The monotony was terrible, every day the same, no brisk trip aloft to salvage or loosen sails. ... All this made me long to return to the big sailing ships. ... In the sailing vessels, we were proud of our job. We would not trade with anyone. In Nordhvalen [a steamship], there was a lot of dissatisfaction and not much camaraderie.*[349]

Another quote will serve to further demonstrate that a comparison of steamers to factories was prevalent among both masters

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[348] Sanna-Mari Hynninen, Jari Ojala, and Jaakko Pehkonen, 'Technological Change and Wage Premiums: Historical Evidence from Linked Employer–Employee Data', *Labour Economics*, no. 24 (2013): 1–11, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.labeco.2013.05.006.
[349] Højrup, *Dampskibskaptajn*, 8:85.

and ordinary sailors and related not only to the nature of the physical work environment but also to the psychology of seafaring:

> *To a (sailing ship) sailor, [a steamship] was like being placed in a noisy factory. There was no need to take notice of the weather, for the ship stomped ahead, meandering through wind and sea, the steam horses working without the slightest interest in anything but coal. We just hung on, and I quickly discovered it was blasphemous to sail with a steamer.*

This sense of nostalgia is widespread in the writings of Danish seafarers of the period, especially among those who had progressed to captain of sailing vessels. In an essay published in 1951, the retired sailing ship captain C. Sørensen gave the following characterisation of Danish seamen on sailing ships.

> *"Granted, life on Danish sailing ships was sometimes hard. Amenities and diet far inferior to what is offered to young people today, but it fostered hardy and tough sailors... A common sailor who could meet the demands made on him in Danish schooners could easily take the hire of an able seaman in any other nation's ships."[350]*

A possible explanation, notes Sørensen, for a decline in the quality of Danish sailors, was that the young sailors took hire on steamers sooner since it paid better and required less."[351] According to Sørensen, these steamship sailors lacked the proper sailor mentality and craftmanship he and his contemporaries' had received in sailing ships.

These sentiments, however, were not universal, and some seafarers were not as indifferent to the benefits of working on steamships. In his memoirs, C. Borgland, a Danish sailor and 1920s Seafarer's Union leader, notes that "the mechanisation at sea" facilitated and helped seafarers promote individual and organised union efforts to improve

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[350] Holm-Petersen and Rosendahl, *Fra Sejl Til Diesel*, 430.
[351] Holm-Petersen and Rosendahl, 430.

working conditions.[352] As a Union leader, Borgland's perspective on the changing labour relations and social positions on board differed from the nostalgic hindsight glorification of Sørensen and others. While mechanisation and division of labour made the tasks on board less diverse, some seafarers appreciated the new hierarchy rooted in the legal-rational rather than the traditional authority of the captain and in seafarers' specialised expertise.

4.10. Conclusions

The sea captain's authority was reconfigured in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. I use here the term reconfiguration to emphasise that it was not merely a question of losing or gaining authority but rather subtle shifts in prevalence and priority between types of authority. Using Weber's ideal types, I argue that while the captain's authority at sea persisted both as a general principle (in maritime law) and in seafaring identity and culture, it was fundamentally reconfigured in structure as a result of the novel operational and commercial practices of the steamship, and the introduction of fast and more reliable means of communication.

In commercial matters, the captain's role and authority were slowly watered down and shifted towards the organisational structure of the shipping company. The merchant sea captain gradually took on the part of a (shipping) 'company man' embedded within a broader and more closely connected network of actors involved in the new complex business reality of the steamship business.

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[352] Borgland, 'Gennem Storm og Stille - En gammel dansk matros' erindringer [Through Storm and Calm - An Old Danish Sailor's Memoires]', 7; For early unionisation of Danish seafarers, see Tortzen, *En Sømand Han Maa Lide: Sømændenes Forbund 1897-1997 Bind I: De Første 50 År*; See also Karel Davids, 'Seamen's Organizations and Social Protest in Europe, *c.* 1300–1825', *International Review of Social History* 39, no. S2 (August 1994): 145–69, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020859000112969.

At sea, the steamship captain's nautical authority was partly shared with other crewmembers whose specialised expertise conveyed a new form of informal power to people other than the captain. I argue that this new organisation resulted from a technological imperative similar to that described by socio-technical systems theory. In Weberian terms, this reconfiguration can be described as a shift away from the captain's authority as traditional towards a more legal-rational legitimacy attained through the deployment of specialised knowledge and skills, certification, and increased social status.

In other areas, such as corporal punishment, new forms of rational authority replaced older forms of traditional and charismatic authority. As the novel rational-legal forms of authority that replaced them were increasingly taken for granted, they provided the seed for new forms of traditional authority. As the steamship's new 'industrialised' authority structures became dominant, it led to nostalgic sentiments of the past, chiefly among older sailing ship captains, those whose craft, identity, and hegemonic authority had dissolved in the black smoke rising from the steamship.

Chapter 5. Time at Sea: Steamships, Time and Seafaring Labour

Morten Tinning (submitted).

5.1. Abstract

Research on time has significantly influenced our understanding of industrial capitalism. This article engages with E.P. Thompson's ideas about task-orientation and clock time as a means of labour exploitation. However, unlike previous scholarship, it does so in the context of the maritime industry. I explore how steamships and maritime industrialization transformed the structure of labour relations and reconfigured the experiences with and perceptions of time among seafarers. Through readings of ego-documents from Danish seafarers, the article shows how pre-industrial perceptions of time 'at sea' differ from Thompson's insights about landed communities, specifically in the distinct construct of shipboard time and its associated power relations. Shipboard time, I argue, led to a different and more positive perception of industrialisation and rigorous clock time among seafaring workers. With this, the article sheds new light on the historical relationship between time, work, and industrial capitalism.

5.2. Introduction

Around 1750, Jasper Petersen sent home two iron stoves and two living room clocks from Holland. Until then, people had stayed around the fire in the kitchen and used two hourglasses as time measurers. In addition, a mark in the window marked the sun's position in the south at noon. This mark was found on a starry night by placing two sticks in the ground outside the house, which, when aligned, gave the position of the Polar Star. At noon on a sunny day, the sun was known to be in the south when the shadow from one stick lined up with the other. A mark was now made in the window sill where the shadow of the transom fell. Although this time determination differed two times a year by approx. 16 minutes each side of true midday, it was sufficiently accurate for an age when there were neither steamships nor railways that left on the minute.[353]

E.P. Thompson's seminal article *Time, Work-discipline and Industrial Capitalism* (1967) opened up a new field of research that fundamentally reshaped how we think about time and industrialisation.[354] In the spirit of Thompson's writings, I begin this article with a quote. It is a quote I believe Thompson would have embraced since it aligns with his arguments that the proliferation of mechanical timekeepers and industrial capitalism transformed the perception of time in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century.

Thompson's most critical insight was to draw attention to an inherent temporal logic of industrial capitalism as the link between the abandonment of pre-industrial task-orientation and the rise of clock time (time orientation) in everyday life and labour. According to Thompson,

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[353] Mærsk Møller, 'Memoire Written by Peter Mærsk Møller Dated Svendborg 1917'.
[354] E. P. Thompson, 'Time, Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism', *Past & Present*, no. 38 (1967): 56–97, http://www.jstor.org/stable/649749.

industrial capitalism transformed time into a quantifiable resource – a "currency" to be measured, controlled, and obsessed about. In Thompson's words: "[t]hose who are employed experience a distinction between their employer's time and their 'own' time. And the employer must use the time of his labour, and see it is not wasted. Time is now currency: it is not passed but spent."[355] In industrial workshops and factories, the owners, managers, and overseers would ensure that workers "learned their lesson, that time is money, only too well"[356] as clock time became a "means of labour exploitation."[357]

Despite the apparent similarities with Thompson's arguments, the opening quote also includes characteristics that differentiate it from Thompson's depiction of pre-industrial, agricultural, and urban communities. The passage describes a sailor's home. Specifically, it is the Danish ship's captain Peter Mærsk-Møller (1836-1927) description of his ancestral family home located on the island of Rømø in the Wadden Sea. A family that could trace its seafaring heritage back at least four generations.[358]

The narrated practices towards time reflect the family's close association with ships and seafaring. The described use of an hourglass (standard timepieces on ships) and the use of the Polar Star and the Sun to determine the time of day (a common practice in maritime navigation) were all practices explicitly relating to seafaring and the methods for measuring time at sea. Even the mention of steamships before railroads carries a subtle hint at the seafaring connections and traditions of the family. In this landed domestic setting, the shipboard means of measuring time were deployed to determine the (clock) time of day even before the arrival of the novel mechanical clocks, indicating a distinctly

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[355] Thompson, 61.
[356] Thompson, 86.
[357] Thompson, 80.
[358] Hornby, *Ved rettidig Omhu...*, 16–17.

different perception of time that relates to seafaring as opposed to agricultural or urban communities.

E.P. Thompson's analysis was restricted to the land and never ventured beyond the seaport and onto the open ocean as it did not explicitly explore seafaring as a form of labour impacted by industrialisation. This article argues that due to the transition from sail to steam and the industrialisation of seafaring labour, significant transformations of time and temporality also occurred at sea and in seafaring labour. Thus, suggesting a revolution in time and temporality equal to that of the landed transformation so eloquently described by Thompson.

Similar to Thompson's depictions of pre-industrial workers on the land, seafaring labour in pre-industrial sailing ships was supremely task-oriented. However, unlike labour on the land, pre-steamship and industrialised seafaring in the age of sail were simultaneously framed by an institutionalised system of measured time. Specifically, a system of 'watches' governed by clock time – or more specifically, 'bell time'.

Furthermore, pre-industrial seafaring labour was not only employment. It was a vocation, an identity, an all-encompassing labour and life shaped and framed by circumstances somewhat different from those described by Thompson. Circumstances that included distinctly task-oriented labour framed but not ruled by clock time, as well as subservience to winds, ocean and capricious sea captains.

This article builds on and expands Thompson's work by exploring the industrialisation of seafaring labour as an intriguing case for "looking beyond the factory walls"[359] to shed new light on the historical relationship between time, work, and industrial capitalism. It defines the transition from sail to steam in the late nineteenth and early

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[359] Aaron W. Marrs, 'Railroads and Time Consciousness in the Antebellum South', *Enterprise and Society* 9, no. 3 (September 2008): 433, https://doi.org/10.1093/es/khm074.

twentieth century as "the transition to mature industrial society"[360] in seafaring labour.[361] By doing so, it acknowledges Paul Glennie and Nigel Thrift's astute observation that "this time-obsessed community [at sea] has been so little remarked upon, even though time-discipline on board ship was arguably fiercer than in the sometime coeval—and much-discussed—factories."[362]

The article deploys a 'view from below' by using ego-documents[363] from Danish seafarers to explore connections between the transition from sail to steam and the transformation of time and temporality in seafaring labour as well as the seafarer's perception of time. Although the ego-documents are predominantly from Danish seafarers, the paper retains a broad international scope since shipping and maritime labour markets were (and indeed still are) extensively international. A merchant ship's working conditions and operating practices (sail or steam, respectively), and as we shall see, the temporal framework around labour were highly uniform and international. The prime reason for this was that the organisation and temporality in seafaring labour had to be sufficiently institutionalised for a randomly assembled crew of seafarers to have a recognisable work structure from the moment they left port.

The transition from sail to steam transformed several different temporalities of seafaring. To capture the complexity and give a broader scope of the transformations of time in a maritime context, the paper explores a "multitude of times which interpenetrate and permeate our

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[360] Thompson, 'Time, Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism', 57.
[361] For a discussion on an earlier introduction of industrial capitalism in seafaring labour, see Marcus Rediker, 'The Common Seaman in the Histories of Capitalism and the Working Class', *International Journal of Maritime History* 1, no. 2 (December 1989): 337–57, https://doi.org/10.1177/084387148900100219.
[362] Paul Glennie and Nigel Thrift, *Shaping the Day* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 319, https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199278206.001.0001.
[363] Tinning and Lubinski, 'Ego-Documents in Management and Organisational History'.

daily lives."[364] Whether on a sailing ship or a steamship, the seafarer's daily temporality of work and watch cycles represent one temporal layer or sediment, while the journey or the hire (i.e., the period of employment) might represent another. This article aims to analyse how these temporal perspectives intertwined in the lived experience of seafarers and how they become challenged and changed by the steamship and the macro-trend of industrialization.

Through an actor-focused, microhistorical analysis[365,] I engage critically with two points in Thompson's work. First, I challenge the universality of Thompson's dichotomy between task-orientation and clock time. Thompson uses this distinct dichotomy to construct a before and after industrial capitalism. However, task-orientation and clock time had co-existed in seafaring labour for centuries before the steamship. Second, I use the seafaring context to further explore and potentially revise Thompson's claim that the dominance of clock time was inevitably and primarily a "means of labour exploitation."[366]

The article proceeds as follows. First, I take a closer look at Thompson's core ideas and review points of critique raised by subsequent scholars. I then contextualise the early use of measured time on board ships and the unique relationship between time and space at sea. Since steamships also transformed the temporality of the shipping business, I then explore the increased focus on time, regularity, and temporal management in the commercial sphere of shipping. I then analyse the impact of steamships on the time and temporality of the journey from one port to another and the transformation of the everyday temporality of seafaring labour. Finally, in the conclusion, I propose we rethink the

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[364] Barbara Adam, *Time and Social Theory* (Polity Press, 1990), http://tupress.temple.edu/book/20000000010139; See also Barbara Adam, 'Modern Times: The Technology Connection and Its Implications for Social Theory', *Time & Society* 1, no. 2 (1 May 1992): 175–91, https://doi.org/10.1177/0961463X92001002003.
[365] Hargadon and Wadhwani, 'Theorizing with Microhistory', Fortcoming; Decker, 'Mothership Reconnection'.
[366] Thompson, 'Time, Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism', 80.

historical relationship between time, work, and industrial capitalism to accommodate and include the distinctly different context of the maritime industry.

5.3. Task-orientation and clock time

Thompson defines task-orientation as the organisation of time according to the necessity of natural time and the performance of specific work tasks. In task-oriented work, the intensity of work and investment of time was inherently irregular, as tasks were performed with a relative disregard for the time spent performing them. Periods of high performance were followed by periods of less intense work (or idleness) until the rhythms of nature dictated another throe of activity.

As workers increasingly left agriculture to labour in workshops and factories, task-orientation gave way to an internalised time-orientation shaped by the perception of time as currency in the context of uniform working hours. Thompson traces this development to the proliferation of the external clock time facilitated by mechanical time-keepers, the synchronised work rhythms of industrial capitalism, and the ordinary worker's capacity to lead a life structured by clock time rather than task-orientation.

For Thompson, the notion of task-orientated work was directly related to 'natural' time rhythms.[367] It represented "perhaps the most effective orientation in peasant societies, and it remains important in the village and domestic industries."[368] In describing examples of natural time orientation, Thompson mentions "fishing and seafaring people" and includes seaport communities, where people "must integrate their lives with the tides" – as in the case of the Maersk family in Rømø – and "the patterning of social time […] follows upon the rhythms of the sea."

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[367] Thompson, 60.
[368] Thompson, 60.

However, Thompson's sweeping statements about seafarers never left terra firma. His arguments are limited to the highly predictable daily cycles of the tides in a seaport and the limitations tides and wind put on the time available for entering and leaving port. Thus, Thompson's brief flirtation with seafaring time only involves situations that "conflicted with urban routines." His prime example is the British Court of Admiralty. An institution which was always open "for strangers [since they came and went by ship], merchants [since they traded by ship], and seafaring men [since they worked on ships]" because these individuals "must take the opportunity of tides and winds, and cannot, without ruin and great prejudice, attend the solemnity of courts and dilatory pleadings."[369]

Thus, Thompson identifies three characteristics of task-orientation at land without paying attention to seafarers or time at sea. First, he proposes that task orientation is "more humanly comprehensible than timed labour." Second, he argues that "a community in which task-orientation is common appears to show the least demarcation between 'work' and 'life'." Meaning that "there is no great sense of conflict between labour and 'passing the time of day'."[370] Third, if the worker "is accustomed to labour timed by the clock, this attitude to labour appears to be wasteful and lacking in urgency."[371] These characteristics form the basis of Thompson's opposition against clock time and its exploitational properties.

Since its publication, Thompson's work has been the subject of detailed scrutiny and critique. Most recently, Vánessa Ogle has pointed out that the proliferation of personal and communal mechanical time-keepers did not automatically move people away from a time anchored in natural, biophysical, or even heavenly rhythms.[372] Michael O'Malley

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[369] Thompson, 60, note 12.
[370] Thompson, 60.
[371] Thompson, 60.
[372] Vanessa Ogle, *The Global Transformation of Time, 1870-1950* (Harvard University Press, 2015), 47–74, chapter 2,

has suggested that historians tend to embrace that task-orientation determined the pace and intensity of labour in pre-industrial societies. And that this all-too-ready acceptance has led scholars to overlook "the cultural attitudes about work that inform any interpretation of natural temporal cues."[373] In particular, Poul Glennie and Nigel Thrift's critique of Thompson's close link between clock time and time-discipline is most notable for the context of this article. They see this connection as "both too narrow and too contextually specific," as there are "other means of time-discipline which conceive of time more flexibly—but which still demand considerable rigour."[374] This article argues that seafaring life and labour represented one such 'other', working with different conceptions of time and time-discipline, leading to different experiences of seafaring labourers before and after industrialization.

5.4. Clocks, bells and early labour organisation at sea

To the earliest seafarers, the movement of celestial bodies defined and measured the passage of time while simultaneously serving as crude points for positioning and navigating the ship. Dictated by the necessities of navigation, time and space were always intimately intertwined at sea.[375] On land, a person in Thompson's task-orientated world might happily go about everyday business without measuring time or inclination to know the precise time of day. Indeed, as described above,

https://www.hup.harvard.edu/catalog.php?isbn=9780674286146; See also Vanessa Ogle, 'Time, Temporality and the History of Capitalism', *Past & Present* 243, no. 1 (1 May 2019): 312–27, https://doi.org/10.1093/pastj/gtz014.

[373] Michael O'Malley, 'Time, Work and Task Orientation: A Critique of American Historiography', *Time & Society* 1, no. 3 (1 September 1992): 341, https://doi.org/10.1177/0961463X92001003002.

[374] Glennie and Thrift, *Shaping the Day*, 47; See also Paul Glennie and Nigel Thrift, 'Reworking E. P. Thompson's `Time, Work-Discipline and Industrial Capitalism'', *Time & Society* 5, no. 3 (1 October 1996): 275–99, https://doi.org/10.1177/0961463X96005003001.

[375] E.G.R. Taylor, *The Haven-Finding Art - A History of Navigation from Odysseus to Captain Cook*, First edition, second impression (London: Hollis & Carter, 1958), 3.

Thompson argued that such a temporal state of mind seems "more humanly comprehensible than timed labour. The peasant or labourer appears to attend upon what is an observed necessity."[376] However, precise time measurement at sea was a practical necessity much earlier.

Evidence suggests that timepieces such as hourglasses were used regularly at sea as early as the thirteenth century.[377] In those days, the sailor (or maritime pilot) would use his orologio (timepiece) to mark out night watches and to calculate the speed and distance travelled. The direction and distance were then deployed in a simple trigonometric table known as the toleta de marteloio, which formed a requisite part of early compass and chart navigation.[378]

By the fifteenth century, technological innovation in shipbuilding enabled the construction of larger ships with more masts, hence a larger crew and a more complicated workflow. As a result, the work organisation became increasingly hierarchical, structured, and specialised. This development appears to have influenced the motivation for the introduction of a formalised temporal system of shift work watches, necessitated by the need to organise and manage a larger and more complex crew composition and workflow.[379] By using clock time to temporally structure work at sea, ships also had a potentially uniform and transferrable system for sailors to know who should work and when. At the same time, the watches facilitated the spatial organisation of a large crew in a confined space. The sailors 'below deck' could rest and eat while always keeping 'at the ready' if required on deck in case of a storm, dangerous waters, complex manoeuvres (tacking and wearing) or when entering and leaving port. Suppose we take the presence of a ship's

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[376] Thompson, 'Time, Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism', 60.

[377] Taylor, *The Haven-Finding Art*, 116; Henningsen, 'Rejs Ud Til Vagt! Om Vagtsystemets Forudsætninger Og Opkomst', 96–97 Henningsen dates the use of hourglasses in merchant ships of the Hanseatic League at around 1400.

[378] Taylor, *The Haven-Finding Art*, 116–21.

[379] Henningsen, 'Rejs Ud Til Vagt! Om Vagtsystemets Forudsætninger Og Opkomst', 63–70.

bell as firm evidence of the marking of the passage of time for organisational purposes. In that case, we can date the regular use of timepieces and a formalised system of shift work framed by clock time to no later than the sixteenth century. Around this time, we also find the first textual evidence of a fixed standardised watch system strikingly similar, if not identical, to the one still used on sailing ships in the late nineteenth century.[380] A strict temporal regime on life and labour was thus introduced much earlier at sea than on land and at least two centuries before Thompson's late eighteenth-century industrial workers came under the yoke of industrial clock time.

Furthermore, the utility of clock time and a push for 'increased' production was not at odds with the task-oriented nature of work at sea. Instead, the rationale for the introduction of clock time at sea came from it was the confined space of the ship, the need to control the physical movement of sailors, and the need to organise for short notice tasks-oriented work that provided the rationale for the introduction of clock time at sea.

5.5. Power and ownership over time at sea

Time at sea configured power relations. In his bestselling memoir, Two Years Before the Mast - A Personal Narrative of Life at Sea (1840), the American lawyer-cum-politician Richard Henry Dana, Jr. noted that "in no State prison are the convicts more regularly set to work, and more closely watched" than seafarers on board a ship.[381] Almost a century later, Christian Borgland, a Danish seafarer and leading member of the Danish Seaman's Union (Sømændenes Forbund) in the 1920s and 30s, made a similar statement about the conditions faced by Danish seafarers

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[380] Henningsen, 'Rejs Ud Til Vagt! Om Vagtsystemets Forudsætninger Og Opkomst'; Dava Sobel, *Longtitude - The True Story of a Lone Genius Who Solved the Greatest Scientific Problem of His Time* (Harper Perennial, 2011), 11–40.
[381] Dana Jr., *Two Years Before the Mast*, 16; Fink, *Sweatshops at Sea: Merchant Seamen in the World's First Globalized Industry, from 1812 to the Present*, 37.

at the turn of the twentieth century: "Life aboard Danish schooners at this time can probably, without exaggeration, be likened, to a kind of forced civilian labour, since forced labour hardly exceeded it either in terms of time or at a personal level."[382] To Borgland, the phrase 'forced civilian labour' (civilt tvangsarbejde) was meant quite literally: "The freedom for the country's people enshrined in the Danish constitution certainly did not apply to sailors; otherwise, such slavery would have been quite unthinkable..."[383] Rhetorically contrasting the democratic rights of Danish citizens with the lived experience of seafarers, Borgland stressed the time discipline engrained in seafaring labour.

Borgland's comparison between seafaring and slavery was not limited to a Danish context. In a peculiar act of reverse logic, the American defender of slavery, George Fitzhugh, noted in 1854: "Abolish negro slavery, and how much slavery still remains? Soldiers and sailors in Europe enlist for life: here for five years. Are they not slaves who have not only sold their liberties but their lives also. And they are worse treated than domestic slaves."[384] While comparing the plight of slaves and sailors is of limited use and ethically questionable, it is worth noting that the analogy between slavery and seafaring was a recurring theme in the political debate on sailors' rights in Britain and especially in the US in the nineteenth century.[385]

For centuries, the authority of the ship's captain had included an institutionalised control and 'ownership' over the sailor's time, labour and freedom.[386] In his lectures on Danish maritime law, published in 1899,

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[382] Borgland, *Gennem Storm Og Stille - En Sømands Erindringer*, 34–35.
[383] Borgland, 35.
[384] George Fitzhugh, *Sociology for the South, or the Failure of Free Society* (Richmond: A. Morris, 1854), 85; Quoted in Fink, *Sweatshops at Sea: Merchant Seamen in the World's First Globalized Industry, from 1812 to the Present*, 54.
[385] Fink, *Sweatshops at Sea: Merchant Seamen in the World's First Globalized Industry, from 1812 to the Present*, 35–63.
[386] For the relation between seafaring and the concept of slavery, see Fink, *Sweatshops at Sea: Merchant Seamen in the World's First Globalized Industry, from 1812 to the Present*.

the Danish Law Professor, Viggo Bentzon, notes: "The ship's crew occupies a position that in many ways resembles that of a servant. The sailor must carry out all work that, in the broadest sense, relates to sailing, and in this respect, he does not work independently but must obey the orders of his superiors."[387] However, comparing a sailor to a landed servant only amounted to a half-truth. "Because of the dangers at sea, it is imperative that everyone on board acts unconditionally according to the captain's will", wrote Bentzon, and "therefore, the captain must be granted great powers to ensure obedience."[388] This reservation in the law left the sailor at the mercy of the captain, "not only because the latter can easily abuse his great authority ... but also because the sailor, isolated from the rest of the world, can often find no impartial witness among the crew, and therefore finds it difficult to escape harsh treatment."[389] Control over seafarers and their time rested with the captain.

Furthermore, the captain's powers were not limited to the day-to-day management of the ship, and crisis situations, when all hands were needed on deck. The law also gave the captain extended powers to define and control the duration of the sailor's employment. One example can be found in Section [§] 22 of the Danish Merchant Ships Discipline Act of 23 February 1866. Here it states that any chartered Danish seafarer was "obliged to follow the ship to whose service he is chartered, even though its passage during the voyage is altered and extended."[390] The seafarer's time and geographical position were intimately and legally bound to the ship. Following the standard two-year charter, the seafarer was entitled to leave the vessel in any port or safe anchorage unless it was destined to proceed directly to the place where the charter was made or the agreed

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[387] Bentzon, *Den Danske Søret*, 114.
[388] Bentzon, 141.
[389] Bentzon, 141.
[390] Indenrigsministeriet [the Danish Ministry of the Interior], 'Lov om Disciplin i Handelsskibe og om Søfolks Forseelser, Forbrydelser samt Forhyring m. v. af 23. Februar 1866, Section IV. Om Mandskabets Hyre m.v., og om dets Ret til at forlade Skibet i visse særegne Tilfælde, §22., https://h58.dk/ArbErhv/DisciplinHandelsskibe.pdf.

debarkation site.[391] In effect, the sailor pledged – by legally enforceable contract – the near absolute control and disposal of his time to the 'ship' for an extended period of time, during which the captain, acting on behalf of the employer, decided his tasks and the use of his time.

Even if the vessel changed captain, the seafarer was still subject to his contractual and statutory duty towards the ship and its owner. As Bentzon pointed out, this comprehensive and statutory control over the sailor's time was partly a practice deemed necessary on board since refusal to work constituted an act of mutiny as it could have catastrophic and potentially fatal consequences for the ship, crew, and cargo.

The captain's, and by proxy the owner's, hegemony over the sailor's time had strong elements of path dependency, and as late as the early twentieth century, it was still firmly institutionalised in seafaring culture and embedded in maritime law. Whether the day was ruled by task-oriented work or clock time, or – in the case of seafaring – both, the worker's power over his time is a defining factor that sets conditions at sea apart from Thompson's depiction of workers' communities on land.

5.6. The commercial temporality of steamships

But the seafarer's time and the autonomy over it is only one layer of the multiple temporalities at sea. Another is the commercial temporality of steamships. On the morning of Sunday, 23 May 1819, the paddle steamer Caledonia arrived in the port of the Danish capital Copenhagen. Being the first steamship in Denmark, a contemporary news report celebrated the Caledonia and its ability to "strip Neptune of his powers" and "subject his trident to its will" and noted the crowd's amazement as the Caledonia set out on a promotional leisure cruise to the city of Elsinore "with urgency towards its destination" at precisely 10.00 AM.[392]

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[391] Bentzon, *Den Danske Søret*, 11–12.
[392] 'Indenlandske Efteretninger', *Nyeste Skilderie af Kjøbenhavn*, 05 1819, 16. årgang, nr. 42 edition, sec. Indenlandske Efteretninger, https://user-9y8ca5x.cld.bz/F-SkilderieAfKjobenhavn-1819-I/336.

The Caledonia was to operate on the regular mail and passenger service between Copenhagen and Kiel, and newspaper notices promoting the new service accentuated the novelty of a reliable sailing schedule. Much was made of the steamer's ability to leave on Tuesday Morning at 05.00, precisely. A detailed timetable included scheduled stops at the island of Møen at 14.00, in Gåbense on the island of Falster at 16.00, and in Bandholm on the island of Lolland at 18.00. Arriving in Kiel on Wednesday morning, the Caledonia would depart from Kiel on Thursday afternoon, arriving in Copenhagen on Friday evening – precisely.[393]

The arrival of the Caledonia shows, first and foremost, that the steamship's potential for regularity, efficiency, and speed had substantial commercial implications for shipping from the very beginning. This potential was admired, recognised and communicated for promotional and commercial purposes. The steamship and its ability to reduce shipping's subservience to wind and "strip Neptune of his powers" was the transformative object and the source of the most dramatic changes in the world of shipping in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.[394] Although the sailing packets of the eighteenth century did provide some measure of regularity, journeys would still depend very much on the weather.[395] With steamship efficiency, resource management and clock time came to the forefront of commercial shipping operations.[396]

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[393] 'Skibsefteretninger, 26. May 1819', *Kiøbenhavns Kongelig alene priviligerede Adresse-Contoirs Efterretninger*, Onsdag d. . maj 1819, 61 Aargang, Nr. 122 edition.

[394] Williams, 'Introduction: The World of Shipping'; Williams and Armstrong, 'An Appraisal of the Progress of the Steamship in the Nineteenth Century'; Deirdre McCloskey, ed., 'The Shift from Sailing Ships to Steamships, 1850-1890: A Study in Technological Change and Its Diffusion Charles K. Harley', in *Essays on a Mature Economy: Britain After 1840* (Routledge, 2006).

[395] Stephen Fox, *The Ocean Railway. Isambard Kingdom Brunel, Samuel Cunard and the Revolutionary World of the Great Atlantic Steamships* (London: Harper Perennial, 2004), 3–16.

[396] For an exellent account of developments in technology and strategies for efficient management of shipboard (fuel) coal consumption, see Crosbie Smith, *Coal, Steam and*

In 1899, the Danish steamship captain and shipowner Peter Mærsk Møller summarized what he saw as the competitive edge of steamships over sailing vessels: the increase in predictability. "Steam is progress, […]. The reason is not that the steamship provides cheaper freight than the sailing ship, but that the steamships are faster and less uncertain than sailing vessels; that the goods are brought at a somewhat predictable time…"[397] Robert E. Annin's contemporaneous textbook on commercial steamship operations supports this interpretation. It states that "the sailing vessel, by reason of its slowness and unreliability", was supplanted by steamships "since merchants could calculate, within a short period, the time of arrival of their goods at any particular port of discharge, and secure the advantages of the prevailing market."[398] Predictability and regularity were what made steamships the superior option. In a steamship, contrary to the 'safely and as fast as possible' logic of sailing ships, it was about getting there in time, on time, and with minimum fuel expenditure. But not every journey unfolded as scheduled.

5.7. The journey – steamships, agency, and time perception

Journeys that conflicted with the planned schedule and temporality of steamships created not just a commercial challenge but also frustrating experiences for the captain and crew. In 1898, the steamship Siam of the Danish East Asiatic Company [EAC] steamed westwards from South East Asia to Europe. Approaching the mouth of the Red Sea, the ship made sluggish progress due to foul weather. Under such conditions, the steam engine burned more coal, and the steamer had to enter the Port of Aden for an unscheduled coaling stop. Einar Himmelstrup, a Danish seafarer, noted the crew's discontent with the delay: "It annoyed us all since it cannot be denied that everyone, from the highest to the lowest,

Ships: Engineering, Enterprise and Empire on the Nineteenth-Century Seas, 1st ed. (Cambridge University Press, 2018), https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108164894.
[397] Mærsk Møller, 'Skibsfarten fra Svendborg og Omegn: 18 February 1899'.
[398] Annin, *Ocean Shipping*, 73.

would prefer to return home to Denmark as soon as possible."[399] The operative phrases here are "would prefer" and "as fast as possible", and in Himmelstrups's narrative, the crew's frustrations have an air of urgency and wasted time. Indeed, the word "possible" (muligt in Danish) suggests an action potential.

Coaling in Aden was expensive, and the ship took only what was absolutely necessary to reach Port Said.[400] Himmelstrup noted that passage through the Suez Canal was faster than on the way out and that coaling at Port Said went smooth as the ship was ready to steam on "by the following midday."[401] But alas! Approaching Gibraltar, the coal reserves again became an issue. The supply taken on at Port Said had been intended to last until Le Havre, but hours before reaching Gibraltar, "the first engineer informed the captain that he did not dare to continue the voyage with the present coal supply." In foul weather, he argued, the reserves would be insufficient to reach [Le] Havre "since the Chinese stokers [employed in the East] use much more coal to keep the steam going than the European ones. We, therefore, had to go into the city of Gibraltar and take in coal."[402]

Passing over the openly racist elements in the comment, the crucial factor is the emphasis on human action. Although the weather played its part, decisions were based on safety and economic considerations. The journey could be optimised, and a faster return to Copenhagen was possible and manageable. In a steamship, speed and movement relied on careful management of coal and mechanical steam power, not the skilled use of sails to harness the capricious favours of nature.

In 1893, only a few years before Himmelstrup's experiences, Jacob Dessauer kept a diary on board the three-masted bark Danmark on

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[399] Himmelstrup, *Med ØK's SIAM til Østasien 1898*, 40.
[400] Himmelstrup, 41.
[401] Himmelstrup, 41.
[402] Himmelstrup, 41.

a journey from Portland, Oregon, around the Cape of Good Hope to Falmouth, England. Contrary to Himmelstrup's narrative of human agency, involuntary delay, and general impatience on a steamship, Dessauer wrote on board a sailing ship, using a language of hopes and dreams:

> *Friday, 24 February 1893: "I hope she will go well all the way. 100 days home."*
>
> *Saturday, 11 March 1893: "Capt. Lausen dreamt that we would get home in 97 days…."*
>
> *Tuesday, 4 April 1893: "Capt. Lausen says 107 days; I say 120 days home."*
>
> *Sunday, 7 May 1893: "If we get home in 28 days, I get a sailor's cap from Capt. Lausen."*
>
> *Tuesday, 6 June 1893: "112 days at sea, hopefully, home in 12 to 14 more days."*
>
> *Wednesday, 14 June 1893: "120 days at sea. … Hope to be in on Sunday or Monday."*
>
> *Thursday, 22 June 1893: "If the wind stays, we may be in by Sunday."*
>
> *Friday, 23 June 1893: "Hope to be in tomorrow afternoon."*
>
> *Saturday. 24 June 1893: "[From Portland] 130 Days to Falmouth."*[403]

[403] Jacob Dessauer, 'Jacob Dessauer's Erindringer fra Barkskibet DANMARK, 17. April 1892 - 24. June 1893 [Jacob Dessauer's Memories from the Bark Ship "Danmark" 17. April 1892 - 24. June 1893]' (Diary, The Bark 'Danmark', 93 1892), 1941:0234, M/S Museet for Søfarts arkiv My emphasis .

In reading Dessauer's entries, it is not that he does not wish to return home as quickly as possible. Indeed, he is constantly (re-)calculating the days until arrival and noting the speed or the distance travelled that day. However, there is a sense of resignation and acceptance of the conditions (what else was there to do?), and movement, fast or slow, is something given, something harnessed from the wind and the circumstances. Control lies with the winds and the currents, not human agency. They act the part of a natural companion, a necessary yet capricious ally.

Richard Henry Dana, Jr. summed up his attitudes toward the conditions and experience of work and the temporality of seafaring:

> *All these little vexations and labors would have been nothing, they would have passed by as the common evils of sea life, which every sailor who is a man will go through without complaint - were it not for the uncertainty, or worse than uncertainty, which hung over the nature and length of our voyage. Here we were, in a little vessel, with a small crew, on a half-civilized coast, at the ends of the earth, and with a prospect of remaining an indefinite period, two or three years at least.* [404]

Neither Himmelstrup's, Deassaur's, nor Dana's narratives are particularly dramatic or extraordinary; to the contrary: they are everyday experiences. However, by comparing them, we observe a subtle yet distinct difference between the respective perceptions of time between sail and steam. Deassaur resigns himself to a language of hopes and dreams, while Dana foregrounds the condition of uncertainty. Himmelstrup, on the other hand, airs sentiments of urgency and 'time wasted'. To the steamship crew, the wind, the unscheduled coaling stops, and 'the Chinese stokers'

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[404] Dana Jr., *Two Years Before the Mast*, 86.

acted as obstructions, hindrances to a much-anticipated timely homecoming.

Steamships were faster, journey times less uncertain, and arrivals and departures from ports highly predictable. For sailing vessels, the future was shrouded in mist, and the homecoming of a sailor was always unpredictable, if not wholly unexpected.[405] On board a steamship, human agency, technology, and engineering prowess fostered expectations and served to disperse, at least in part, the fog of uncertainty about the future. By its ability to 'strip Neptune of his powers', the steamship facilitated a significant transformation in the seafarer's perception of time.

If we conceptualise the journey – the ship's movement from A to B – as a product of the seafarer's labour, then there was no principal-agent conflict between their employer's time and the seafarer's "own" time on a steamship. Both parties agreed that time should not be wasted. In the case of Dessauer, Dana and the men of sailing ships, it was not that they did not wish for a speedy homecoming. However, the efficiency they sought was out of reach and tied up in hopes, dreams, and uncertainty. Time was indeed passed, not spent, just as in the case of Thompson's pre-industrial task-orientation on land. In a steamship, the perception was that action could be taken. Time could be invested, spent and utilized efficiently. At the temporal layer of the journey, the steamship's ability to adhere to clock time did not translate into a "means of labour exploitation."[406]

5.8. Watch systems and labour at sea

Before leaving port, the crew of a sailing vessel would be divided into two groups designated respectively as the starboard watch and the port

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[405] Taylor, *Sons of the Waves*, 126–45, chapter 9; See also Weiburst, *Deep Sea Sailors: A Study in Maritime Ethnology*.

[406] Thompson, 'Time, Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism', 80.

watch. The Danish sailor Otto Søtoft recounts the departure of Havfruen bound for Java in 1876:

> *During the first evening, while anchored in the Copenhagen roadstead, the watches were distributed in the usual way so that the carpenter joined the starboard watch under the first mate while the sailmaker joined the port watch under the second mate, after which both mates took turns to designate whom they wanted on their watch.*[407]

The age-old navigational relationship between time and space at sea meant that the day did not follow the astronomical day (midnight to midnight) as on land. Instead, the maritime (nautical) day ran from noon until noon the following day. This originated from the need to know precisely when the sun would reach its highest point in the sky (the upper meridian transit) to determine the ship's position. From the sun's height at noon, the ship's position in relation to north and south latitudes could be calculated and noted in the ship's log, thus constituting a rational marking of the beginning of the day.[408]

At sea (and in port), the 24 hours of the day were divided into six equal intervals or 'watches', each lasting four hours. These time intervals were measured using an hourglass, although mechanical clocks became more common from the late nineteenth century onwards. The hourglass or clock was the helmsman's responsibility since he was (in theory) always awake and alert. When the sand ran out, he would mark the passing of time by striking the ship's bell. A maritime hourglass would commonly measure half-hour intervals or 'one glass', and as the sand ran out the first time of a four-hour watch, the glass was turned, and

[407] Otto Søtoft, 'Otto Søtoft: Erindringer Fra En Reise Som 1ste Styrmand Med Fregatten "Havfruen" Fra Hjemstedet Til Java Og Retur i Aarene 1876-77.', ed. Hanne Poulsen, *Handels- Og Søfartsmuseets Årbog* 49 (1990): 137–38, https://tidsskrift.dk/mfs_aarbog/article/view/96426.
[408] Sobel, *Longtitude*, 21–23.

'one glass' was struck on the ship's bell – ding. After the second glass (one hour), the hourglass was turned again, and two consecutive blows were struck – ding-ding. Two successive strokes marked the full hour at three glasses, followed by a separate stroke marking the half-hour – ding-ding, ding. This process would continue until the end of the four-hour watch or eight glasses. At eight glasses, the watch would turn, and the process would start again with a new watch on duty.[409]

To avoid sailors following the same daily rotation and to ensure that the night watchman on duty alternated from one night watch to the next, it was necessary to slightly displace the watches during the nautical day (see Table 5-1). Danish achieved this displacement by merging the Afternoon watch (12-16) and the Dog Watch (16-20). By this aggregation, the number of watches was reduced to five, and the rotation meant that one group had a long watch from noon to eight in the evening while being off duty during the same hours the following day. Over two days, the night watches would alternate, and each group would work sixteen hours one day and only eight hours the next. In British ships, by contrast, the Dog Watch was split in two, thus achieving a more even distribution of hours, with fourteen hours one day and ten hours the next. Evidence suggests that Danish sailors preferred the English division of watches to the Scandinavian one.[410] Despite minor national and geographical variations, this formal system, known as watch-on-watch, was sufficiently institutionalised for a randomly assembled crew to have a recognisable work structure from the moment they left port.

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[409] Henningsen, 'Vagt Til Søs', 173.
[410] Henningsen, 172.

Table 5-1: Watch-on-watch system.[411]

	Watch-on-watch (no rotation)	British watch-on-watch	Danish watch-on-watch	Later Modification
12.00 Noon	Afternoon Watch	Afternoon Watch	Platfod	Formiddagsvagt (continued)
13.00	Danish: Eftermiddagsvagt		(extended dog watch)	
14.00	German: Nachmittagswache			Eftermiddagsvagt
15.00	Dutch: Achterwacht/Namiddagswache			
16.00	Dog Watch	Dog Watch		
17.00	Danish: Platfod			
18.00	German: Plattfuss	Second or Last Dog Watch		
19.00	Dutch: Platvoet			Første vagt
20.00	First Watch	First Watch	Første Vagt	
21.00	Danish: Første Vagt			
22.00	German: Erste Wache, Frühwache			
23.00	Dutch: Eerste Wacht			
24.00	Second Watch, Graveyard Watch	Second Watch	Anden Vagt	Hundevagt
01.00	Danish: Anden Vagt, Hundevagt			
02.00	German: Zweite Wache, Hundewache			
03.00	Dutch: Hondewacht			
04.00	Day Watch, Death Watch	Day Watch	Dagvagt	Dagvagt
05.00	Danish: Dagvagt, Morgenvagt			
06.00	German: Tagwache, Morgenwache			
07.00	Dutch: Dagwacht			
08.00	Forenoon Watch	Forenoon Watch	Formiddagsvagt	Formiddagsvagt
09.00	Danish: Formiddagsvagt			
10.00	German: Vormittagswache			
11.00	Dutch: Voormiddagswacht			

The system served as a prerequisite for coordinating the multiple and complex tasks required to operate a sailing vessel, no matter the composition of the crew. Table 5-1 (above) shows a schematic view of the watch configuration of the watch-on-watch system. The international scope of the system is emphasised in the references to the names given to the watches on Danish, British, German and Dutch ships.

In the 1920s, during the final years of the commercial sailing ship, the division of watches was again modified. As shown in Table 5-1, the hours between noon and midnight were reorganised (Later Modification). This modification was used in Scandinavian, Dutch, and German ships. The advantage was that the extended Scandinavian eight-hour Dog watch was

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[411] Based on Henningsen, 'Vagt Til Søs'; Weiburst, *Deep Sea Sailors: A Study in Maritime Ethnology*, 49–53.

broken up, allowing better sleep opportunities after the early morning watch between 4.00 and 8.00. Within the context of this paper, it is interesting to note that this late version of the watch system has the configuration of a more industrial land-based work schedule. It has more features in common with industrial work in a factory than the original early system of watches. The daylight hours were now divided into three long watches, followed by two shorter – yet necessary – watches at night. The port watch and starboard watch now alternated between a six-hour watch or a ten-hour day divided into two watches of five hours.

In a sailing vessel, the work consisted of handling and inspecting the sails and ropes and salvaging them if necessary. The watch would also include shorter rotations at the helm and on the lookout, tasks often rotating at one or two-hour intervals. In calm weather, the crew on a watch not serving as helmsmen or lookouts were put to work, and "you will never see a man, on board a well-ordered vessel, standing idle on deck, sitting down, or leaning over the side" since "the discipline of the ship requires every man to be at work upon something when he is on deck, except at night and on Sundays."[412] During extended periods of fine weather, the ship would sail "without altering a sail or bracing a yard."[413] In that case, the crew would do maintenance work "on the rigging, making yarn and seizing stuff, and tarring the standing rigging."[414]

This continual workflow served two functions. First, the crew was kept busy to keep order and avoid conflict. Second, the future (read the weather) was always unpredictable, and the ship and crew had to be ready in the event of a storm or other events that might pose a danger to the ship and crew. Although seafaring labour was formally framed by the clock time rhythms of the watch-on-watch system, a constant state of

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[412] Dana Jr., *Two Years Before the Mast*, 16.
[413] Dana Jr., 47.
[414] Dana Jr., 46–47.

alert and the task-oriented nature of the work carried the essence of seafaring labour in a sailing ship.

5.9. Work watches and overtime

The previous section explored the formalised watch system based on clock time and the most prevalent national variations. However, another widespread tradition existed whereby the captain (and, by proxy, the employer) expected and enforced additional work from the seafarers. This was done by letting them do work watches, as they were ironically nick-named. The basic concept was that the off-duty crew were not allowed to rest and recuperate but had to stay on deck and work during the day. In most ships, these work watches would often include the off-duty extra work from 8-10 and 12-15, and the work would typically include ship maintenance and cleaning. With the use of 'work watches', the average working hours increased to fourteen or sixteen hours per day compared to the twelve-hour average in the formalised watch-on-watch system.

The Danish sailor H.C. Røder describes how the work watches were an integral part of life on board the German three-masted bark ship Oceania in 1901. "There was watch-on-watch, but in the German system, also used in the Danish sailing ships of that age, there were the so-called work watches on top of the watch-on-watch duty."[415] Røder then describes the two-day watch pattern in detail, with 14-15 hours of work daily and no more than 3-4 hours of rest at any one time. Røder also notes that the deployment of work watches on board the Oceania was a cause for conflict between the crew and the officers. However, "What caused particular dissatisfaction", writes Røder, "was that, while it was customary on other ships in the tropics, that those on

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[415] H.C. Røder, *Dansk skibsfarts renæssance - Dansk skibsfarts historie fra Københavns Frihavns åbning 1894 til vor tid - en gammel skippers erindringer*, vol. 1 (København: Høst & Søns Forlag, 1962), 37.

night watch who were 'standby' - i.e. had no direct job such as, e.g. the helmsman and lookout – could rest on deck and get some refreshing sleep. There was very rarely an opportunity for such rest on the Oceania. The officers would always find something to occupy us with."[416]

As Røder indicates, the work watches were immensely unpopular and hated by the seafarers. In fact, they were so unpopular that they slowly disappeared in English ships around 1900, while they were banned by law on German ships in 1902 after a great sailors' strike in Hamburg. In Denmark, however, work watches persisted until the end of the First World War. The use of work watches was mainly continued in small, often under-crewed vessels, which were still numerous in the Danish merchant fleet until the early 1930s. On board these smaller vessels, the limited size of the crew and the often low average age lowered the risk of conflict and mutiny, and the captain was still an autocratic patriarch running a small sailing empire. In time, however, many captains realized that the extra work effort was not proportional to the risk of exhausting the crew or fostering unrest and dissatisfaction.[417]

Christian Borgland comments on the final downfall of the much-lamented 'work watches' in his memoirs quoted earlier. "Everyone supported [the work watches], except those affected." They were fiercely guarded in Danish sailing ships, "at least right up to the [strict adherence to the] watch-on-watch system permeated from the steamship to the sailing ship."[418]

The steamships' positive influence also came from the 'new' seafarers working in the engine room. As strict adherence to the clock time of the watch-on-watch system – with workdays of 10 or 14 hours plus overtime – was adopted in the steamships, it only applied to the deck crew. Yet, "[t]he machine crew, engineers as well as stokers, had 8 hours

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[416] Røder, 1:37.

[417] Benjamin Asmussen, *De sidste sejlskibe - småskibsfarten i Danmark omkring verdenskrigene*, Maritim Kontakt 33 (København: Kontaktudvalget for Dansk Maritim Historie og Samfundsforskning, 2010), 39–44.

[418] Borgland, *Gennem Storm Og Stille - En Sømands Erindringer*, 25–26.

a day [4+4 hours] both at sea and on land." This discrepancy "was enough to lead the thoughts of the deck crew towards the regulation of their long working hours. The impetus, writes Borgland, was "first and foremost, his colleague, the stoker living next to him in the forecastle, and his sharply regulated 8 hours on land."[419] The engine crew's work consisted of maintenance and running of a steam engine, and even though the machine had to run 24 hours a day, the work was comparable to any factory machine worker. The marine steam engine brought factory clock time onboard the ship. Working side by side with 'factory workers' made the conditions of traditional seafaring labour seem all the more harrowing. Since the dictates of nature in a steamship were not as uncompromising as in a sailing vessel, many failed to see the rationale behind the traditional task-oriented – all work, no life – pledge to the ship.

One thing was to get rid of the unpaid work watches. Another thing was to get paid for working overtime: "After a few days working [overtime] in [8-hour shifts], there was nothing I longed for more than getting to sea and working regular hours, four hours of work and eight hours of rest twice a day. The rest of the crew could go out and experience life. I could not, but it paid well …." Although the example relates to work in the port, some steamship seafarers recognized both advantages and disadvantages of overtime. It was hard work, but it paid well. Up to a certain point, overtime became negotiable, something you could choose and capitalise on. Unless the overtime resulted from danger or a crisis, seafarers could sometimes leverage it to their advantage.

Despite this increase in rest and pay, not all seafarers found the steamship a blessing. "To a (sailing ship) sailor, it was like being placed in a noisy factory. There was no need to take notice of the weather. The ship stomped ahead, meandering through wind and sea, the steam horses working without the slightest interest in anything but coal. We just hung on, and I quickly discovered it was blasphemous to sail with a

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[419] Borgland, 57–58.

steamer."[420] However, the nostalgic longing of some sailors for a bygone age of sailing ships did not relate so closely to labour conditions as to the craft or techné of seafaring. Otto Søtoft explains what moved him to leave a good position as the second mate on the S/S Georg, plying the waters between Copenhagen and Newcastle on Tyne in 1876:

> [It was] not the prospect of better pay or better food. More longing for the magic that the tropics stir in many people, and the romance of the sailing ships, which was still in my blood ... the whistling of the wind in the rigging and in the sails during stormy weather, the gentle swells of the great seas in the trade winds with all sails set. The Southern Cross flashed in the dark tropical sky as the Shantyman sang when halyards and braces had to be stretched before the watch turned.[421]

Despite the disdain for steamers among some seafarers, it seems that after serving in sailing ships early in their careers, most Danish seafarers had no fierce objection to leaving the long hours and lower wages in sailing ships' to work in steamers instead. An indication of this can be found in the experiences of the Danish Seaman's Church priest in London in 1909, who noted that sailing ships were mainly crewed by 'boys' while steamers were manned by adults.[422]

5.10. Conclusions

The use and institutionalisation of clock time sea preceded that on land by centuries. However, unlike on land, the sea's dangers, the ship's isolated conditions, and the embedded and naturalized practices of

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[420] Knud Andersen, *Matros, erindringer* (Copenhagen: Borgens Forlag, 1965), 12.
[421] Søtoft, 'Otto Søtoft: Erindringer Fra En Reise Som 1ste Styrmand Med Fregatten "Havfruen" Fra Hjemstedet Til Java Og Retur i Aarene 1876-77.', 135–36.
[422] Jørgensen, *Arbejdere Til Søs 1870-1911*, 22.

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maritime traditions created and sustained a temporal structure at sea, framed by clock time but conditioned by nature and task-oriented work. With the transition from sail to steam, the traditional, uncertain, unfree, and pre-industrial perception of time slowly dissolved. As a result, a more industrial conception of time emerged out of the existing institutionalised temporal framework for work. As with Thompson's concept of industrial clock time, it was a perception of time based on human agency. However, contrary to Thompson's workshop and factory workers repressed and exploited by the clock time demands of industrial capitalism, many seafarers felt that industrial capitalism's rigorous adherence to clock time extricated them from earlier forms of labour exploitation and brought better terms and conditions for work at sea. In that sense, the transition to steam was, in time, perceived to have a liberating effect on work relations. In the process, seafarers gained increased physical and mental freedom they had never experienced before. The steamship provided the fundamental conditions for a break with a total dependency on nature and a task-orientated perception of time. The seafarer's submission to nature, the autocratic role of the captain, and seafaring conditions became negotiable and facilitated the potential for a more active struggle for better conditions. The sailing ships' pre-industrial perception of time was reconfigured into a more industrialised understanding of time in a continual exchange between past and present, then and now.

Seafarers gained and experienced a new sense of freedom embedded in the distinction between work and leisure time and the opportunity to control and negotiate their own time. At sea, task-orientated work and unequal power relations carried the means of labour exploitation. In some sense, seafarers had to learn rather than re-learn the art of living that Thompson suggested was lost in the industrial revolution. The allegedly inevitable labour exploitation inherent in clock time appears more nuanced when viewed through the eyes of seafarers and the lens of industrialization at sea. In understanding the relationship

between time and labour at sea, we find that individual self-determination and power over time were more critical than the inherently exploitative conceptualization of industrialized clock time suggested by E.P Thompson.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Published ego-documents in Danish maritime history.

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